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A

VINDICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

OF

NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES.

AND

The Churches' Quarrel Espoused;

OR,

A REPLY TO CERTAIN PROPOSALS.

By JOHN WISE, A.M.,
PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN IPSWICH.

FOURTH EDITION.

BOSTON:
CONGREGATIONAL BOARD OF PUBLICATION.
23 CHAUNCY STREET.
1860.

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CAMBRIDGE:
Allen and Farnham, Printers.

PREFACE.

In issuing a new edition of Rev. John Wise's Vindication of the Government of the New England Churches, and The Churches' Quarrel Espoused, or Reply to certain proposals, the Congregational Board of Publication would express their high appreciation of the merit of these articles, and of the salutary influence they have exerted upon the order and prosperity of the churches for more than a century past. The views here expressed of the liberty and independence of the churches, their rights and discipline (except what he says of ruling elders), are the views which have generally been adopted by the churches from their first organization. As we said of Bellamy, Hopkins, Robinson, and others, "We do not abridge, or alter the phraseology, but leave the author to express his own views in his own way, that the reader may have the sentiments of the writer, his style, and in some measure a knowledge of the times in which he lived."

The late Hon. Zachariah Eddy, of Middleboro', who was a distinguished lawyer, a sound and able

theologian as well as devoted Christian, and uncommonly familiar with the writings of the Pilgrims and New England Fathers, knowing that the Board had proposed to issue a new edition of this work, wrote to the secretary as follows: —

MIDDLEBORO', Dec. 15, 1858.

DEAR SIR, — I have re-read Mr. Wise's book, and think the republication of it by the Congregational Board of Publication very desirable. There is sharp and strong reasoning in it, and it marks our Congregationalism in Massachusetts for a full century. It has been the means of saving to our churches their true independency, and our ministers from combining to exercise a joint influence over them. It is also the best exposition of the platform that has ever been given, and has wellnigh brought its "two faces" to look in the same direction. It is the only book of authority recognized by our courts of law as a reliable commentary on the platform. These reasons seem conclusive.

But the antiquity of the book must be borne in mind. The edition I have was printed in 1772, and those in the Antiquarian, Harvard College, and Brown libraries, are of the same date; and also that in the Athenæum, and Mr. Choate's and Mr. Thornton's, I think are the same. But the first edition of the "Churches' Quarrel," was as early as 1710; and the first edition of the "Vindication of the Government of the Churches" as early as 1715. It will be necessary, I think, to find copies of these different editions in order to get the *correct reading*, as well as to authenticate the antiquity of the book. There should be also an introductory article containing some particulars of the life of Mr. Wise. I would add the attestation of the Supreme Court, Baker & Fales, 16th Massachusetts Reports, which makes his writings

on ecclesiastical subjects a book of authority. I would also add what Mr. Bancroft says in his volume 2d, page 427, when writing against the taxes as not voted by the assembly, Mr. Wise exclaimed, "Democracy is Christ's government in church and in State." In this reprint are contained the names of the original subscribers, which may be regarded as a public recommendation. The list contains many of the most respectable laymen and ministers then living (in 1772) and should be printed in the new edition.

With great respect,

Z. Eddy.

The above suggestions of the Hon. and lamented Mr. Eddy have been attended to, — the different editions compared, revised, and corrected; an introductory article by Rev. J. S. Clark, D. D., prefixed; and the original names of subscribers appended, which give interest to this edition, and make it valuable to the antiquarian, and to all who would know the views of our Fathers of the early New England churches on the subject of church polity.

Boston, May, 1860.

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTORY NOTICE,

BY REV. J. S. CLARK, D. D.

WHOEVER visits the old burying-ground in the town of Essex, formerly a parish of Ipswich known by the Indian name of *Chebacco*, will observe, not far from the principal entrance, a massive slab of red sand-stone resting on four granite props, with a tablet of slate, some ten or fifteen inches square, sunk into its surface, bearing the following inscription: —

"Underneath lies the body of
Rev. JOHN WISE, A. M.,
First Pastor of the 2d Church in Ipswich;
Graduated at Harvard College, 1673;
Ordained Pastor of said Church, 1683;
And died April 8, 1725, Aged 73.
For Talents, Piety, and Learning, he shone
As a star of the first magnitude."

It is evidently a transcript of the original writing on the sand-stone slab, now entirely effaced. But the memory of the man whose dust reposes beneath that stone has been more enduring. His deeds still live. They will live forever; for they were the enactment of everlasting truth.

JOHN WISE was born in Roxbury, Mass., the son of Joseph Wise. The exact date of his birth is lost; but his baptism, which, according to the prevailing custom in the Congregational churches of those times, was seldom more than eight days after, is entered "August 15, 1652." He was a graduate of Harvard College in the class of 1673 — not unknown to fame even then, as may be inferred from the fact that he went forth to the work

of the ministry "highly recommended by the General Court." Though he commenced his labors at Chebacco in 1680, his ordination was not effected, nor his church fully constituted, till the 12th of August, 1683,* owing to the vexatious hinderances thrown in the way by the old church and society. Those who are versed in tracing effects to their causes, or in referring traits of character to their formative source, will readily believe that these three years of conflict "for the right," had something to do in nursing that liberty-loving spirit, which the young pastor and new church were destined to show forth in after life.

The odious and illegal tax which Sir Edmund Andros, the governor under King James II., was compelling the towns to levy in support of his despotic rule, was too much for the free-born to bear. But what could they do? The pastor of Chebacco and a few of his parishioners, with some other citizens of Ipswich, did this: On the evening of August 22d, 1687, the day before the town-meeting at which an assessor was to be chosen for carrying that hateful measure into effect, they came together to talk matters over, and agreed to pass by the article in the warrant requiring the election of such an officer; which was accordingly done, after Mr. Wise had made a speech, and said, among other eloquent words, "We have a good God, and a good king, and shall do well to stand for our privileges." No sooner did these things come to the governor's ears than he ordered the arrest of Mr. Wise and five others, who, after lying in Boston jail twenty-one days, were fined and put under bonds to keep the peace. In the case of Mr. Wise, as the ringleader, he was not only fined £50, and put under bonds of £1,000, but suspended also from the ministry. In his narrative of this transaction, after the expulsion of Andros, which happened the year following, Mr. Wise, with characteristic pith, remarks: "The evidence in the case, as to the substance of it, was that we too boldly endeavored to persuade ourselves we were Englishmen, and under privileges."

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* By a singular mistake, probably in transferring the original inscription to the slate tablet, the year of his settlement is there given as 1681, The evidence is so strong in favor of 1683, that, in copying for these pages, the other has been made to correspond with it.

We may be sure that a minister so trained, and imbued with such a spirit, would be among the first to discover any encroachment on the rights of the churches, and the last to surrender one iota of their just liberties, either to Pope or Presbytery. It was but following his own instincts, therefore, when, in a day of peril to their ancient polity, he thrust himself between them and harm in that memorable production, "THE CHURCHES' QUARREL ESPOUSED," which is herewith reproduced in a new edition, almost ninety years after the last was issued.

Its origin was on this wise. At a meeting of the Boston Association of Ministers, held November 5th, 1705, sixteen "Proposals," which had been previously drawn up by a committee appointed for that purpose, "were read and assented to," and were put forth for the consideration and assent of "the several associated ministers in the several parts of the country." These proposals, though couched in plausible terms, and embodying some useful hints, were denounced by Mr. Wise as revolutionary — subversive of the Cambridge Platform, the then recognized "Constitution" of these churches. His treatment of the aforesaid proposals is in the satirical form of a trial for treason, wherein they are severally found guilty and condemned to death. Never was a verdict more heartily rendered, nor a sentence more promptly executed. Congregationalists of our day, grown familiar with modern innovations, will fail to detect in these proposals all the ugly features which Mr. Wise saw in them, unless they follow him through his illustrations, and learn to look at things *in embrio et in rerum natura*, to cite one of his many classical allusions. The leading ideas contained in them may be reduced to these three: First, to give the ministerial meetings, which were then coming into popular favor, an ecclesiastical character, by bringing before them business pertinent only to the churches. Second, to run these associations, thus ecclesiasticized and enlarged by a lay delegation, into standing councils, whose decisions in all ordinary cases should be "final and decisive." Third, to allow "no particular pastor or congregation to employ any one in occasional preachings who has not been recommended by a testimonial under the hands of some association."

The first two of these ideas had been offered to the acceptance of the churches forty years before, by the Synod of 1662, in con-

nection with the Halfway Covenant, but so strongly did they savor of "Prelacy," that not a church was found ready at that time to entertain them; no pastor was bold enough to urge them. Ecclesiastical councils had thus far been of rare occurrence, except for the expression of a sisterly fellowship among the churches, as at the settlement and removal of ministers; and when called for advice on questions of difficulty, merely *gave* their advice, and left those who asked it of them to follow it or not, just as they deemed there was "*force of reason*" in it, or not. So adverse were the churches to the least semblance of encroachment on their right of self-control, that the Synod of 1662 found it necessary to insert, in their scheme of Consociation, the nullifying acknowledgment that "every church . . . . hath received from the Lord Jesus full power and authority ecclesiastical within itself, regularly to administer all the ordinances of Christ, and is not under any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatsoever,"— which was equivalent to knocking their Consociation on the head as soon as born.

As to the third point embraced in these proposals, that nobody must preach "who has not been recommended by a testimonial under the hands of some association," it should be stated, for the information of those not familiar with "the old ways," that hitherto a "license" or "approbation" to preach was only "the express or implied authority granted by a church to preach to *them*." (Congregational Dictionary, p. 214, Art. License.) The Congregational churches had acknowledged no human authority, either ministerial, prelatic, or civil, as a prerequisite to the employment of any one whom they chose to select. They would submit to none; though they thankfully availed themselves of every help, especially that of settled ministers, in finding suitable candidates.

The Cambridge Platform is silent on this subject; but John Cotton, in his "Way of the Churches" (pp. 39, 40), indirectly tells us how ministers got licensed, by showing "in what manner they were chosen." "When any of the churches are destitute of any of these officers, the brethren of the church (according to the Apostle's advice, in defect of deacons, and so in defect of all other officers), *they look out from amongst themselves* such persons as are in some measure qualified according to the direction of the

word. If the church can find out none such in their own body, they send to any other church for fit supply, and each church looketh at it as their duty to be mutually helpful one to another in yielding what supply they may, without too much prejudice to themselves. Such being recommended to them for such a work, they take some time of trial of them, partly by their own observation and communion with them, partly by consultation with the elders of other churches."

In *theory*, therefore, a Congregational church, destitute of a pastor, looked over their own list of members for a suitable candidate. If they could find one, of sufficient promise, they "placed him in the pulpit and heard him preach," and applied such other tests as they deemed necessary to a satisfactory judgment of his qualifications. Their own "approbation" was all the testimonial he got, or wanted. If they found no suitable person for that office among themselves, they looked into other churches, consulted the ministers, consulted the laymen, conversed with the candidate recommended, took him into the pulpit, took him to their houses, — used all appropriate means, — and then "licensed" him, if he stood the test, and settled him if he and they could agree.

The General Court undertook to interfere with this right in 1652, by ordering that a license should be obtained from a council or county court; but so determined was the resistance, that the order was revoked the following year. "If a church has liberty of election and ordination," said the Woburn church in their petition on the subject, "then it has the power of approbation." (3 Mass. Hist. Coll. vol. 1, 42.) Nearly fifty years later, namely, in 1699, Increase Mather, with nine other ministers, signed and sent forth their "Advice unto the Churches of New England," the drift of which was "to beware of running after new preachers, of whose endowments and principles they have not had a reasonable attestation." Expressing also their own intention thenceforth to admit into their pulpits "no stranger, coming as a preacher, without sufficient assurances of his being what he pretends to be," except by first passing him through "a solemn examination of his capacity for the tremendous work of preaching the everlasting gospel." But this put no restraints on the ancient liberties, or the existing usages of the churches; nor did it imply

that their trial and approbation of a candidate would not be regarded by these ministers as a "sufficient assurance" of his "capacity" to preach. It was simple and reasonable advice, having reference particularly to illiterate pretenders coming from abroad.

Thus the matter stood when these sixteen proposals came out, and called forth, in reply, this excoriating satire; which had the effect, not only to explode the whole project, but to recall the churches to their first principles of Congregationalism, and to reseat them on their ancient platform more firmly than ever for the next sixty years.* Even to this day it is common for ministerial bodies to insert in their constitutions, or rules of business, a disavowal of all "ecclesiastical authority," out of respect to an inwrought jealousy among the churches, which apparently had its origin in this affair. The sudden and complete triumph which this small book achieved is the more remarkable, when it is considered that the proposed innovations were supported by an array of names which were deemed a tower of strength to any cause which had their indorsement. It was printed in 1710. A second edition was issued in 1715, prefaced with the following letter, which, coming from two of the most popular ministers of the day, may be taken as an exponent of the public sentiment generally.

GLOUCESTER, March 20, 1715.

"REVEREND SIR, — We have had the favor and satisfaction of reading, and, according to our measure, considering the transcendent logic as well as grammar and rhetoric of your Reply to the Proposals; by which our eyes are opened to see much more

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* The "dignified silence and pious contempt," — *visum est non alio remedio quam generoso silentio et pio contemptu utendum nobis esse*, — which Cotton Mather, the reputed author of the Proposals, tried to turn upon Mr. Wise (see his Ratio Dis. p. 185), probably did not extend beyond his own breast; certainly not beyond the circle of those who subscribed their names with his. And he himself had the candor to own before dismissing the subject, that "in a deference to (the opposition) of good men, the *Proposals* were never prosecuted beyond the bounds of *mere Proposals*," though in Connecticut, after being shorn of their most objectionable features, they resulted in the Consociation system, which now prevails over part of the State.

than ever before we saw, of the value and glory of our invaded privileges; and are of opinion, that if your consent may be obtained to a new edition, it may be of wonderful service to our churches, if God shall please to go forth with it. However, it may be a testimony that all our watchmen were not asleep, nor the camp of Christ surprised and taken before they had warning.

"We are, Reverend Sir,

"Full of dutiful respect and gratitude,

"Your sons and servants,

"Samuel Moody.

"John White."

Encouraged by the success of his first blow in defence of invaded rights, he repeated the stroke soon after in his "Vindication of the Government of New England Churches," — a production as remarkable for tough logic as the other is for keen satire. It was first issued in 1717, and is unquestionably the clearest and most convincing demonstration of the Congregational polity ever put forth in the same number of pages. In the Supreme Judicial Court, Baker *versus* Fales, Chief Justice Parker quoted from this treatise in 1820, as the highest ecclesiastical authority. (Mass. Rep. vol. xvi. p. 499.) It would have left its mark on any age that could produce it. But in that age, and among a people whose susceptibilities of impression were quickened by late encroachments on popular freedom in the State, and still later, on the liberties of the churches, it was like setting a seal to melted wax. Especially forcible is his argument "drawn from the light of nature." Digging down to the bottom, and laying bare the foundation-stones, he shows that all human government is, and must be, originally derived from the people. "For as they have a power, every man in a natural state, so, upon a combination, they can and do bequeathe this power unto others, and settle it according as their united discretion shall determine," — which is seen in the obvious fact "that when the subject of sovereign power is quite extinct, that power returns to the people again, as to its natural source." Ranging all governments under three heads — monarchy, oligarchy, democracy — and subjecting them each to a scrutiny in the light of nature, he discovers that the last named is incomparably the best suited to the end for which hu-

man government is instituted; and looking at the Prelatic, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational, as the then corresponding forms of ecclesiastical rule, he finds the same grounds of preference for the latter. "To me," he says, "it seems most apparent that under Christ, the reason of the constitution of these and the primitive churches is really and truly owing to the original state and liberty of mankind, and founded peculiarly in the light of nature," which conclusion being admitted, there is in it, he thinks, the force of a divine sanction. "It seems to me as though wise and provident nature, by the dictates of right reason, excited by the moving suggestions of humanity, and awed by the just demands of natural liberty, equality, and the principles of self-preservation, originally drew up the scheme, and then obtained the royal approbation."

This argument for the democracy of Congregational churches from the light of nature, which at that time was truly what he calls it, "an unbeaten path," was quite as available for a democracy in states, — an inference which could not have escaped the thoughtful reader of that age, nor have failed to give the public mind a bias towards the political independence which was achieved in the age following. If Thomas Jefferson confessed himself indebted to the business meetings of a church in his neighborhood — substantially Congregational in government — for his best ideas of a democracy, much more were John Adams and his New England compatriots beholden to their ecclesiastical surroundings for the republican tendencies of their politics.* Indeed, some of the most glittering sentences in the immortal Declaration of American Independence are almost literal quotations from this essay of John Wise. And it is a significant fact, that in 1772, only four years before that declaration was made, a large edition of both those tracts was published by subscription in one duodecimo volume. The presumption which this fact alone suggests, that it was used as a political text-book in the great struggle for freedom then opening in earnest, is fully con-

* In Bancroft's History, Vol. II. p. 427, after alluding to Mr. Wise's determined resistance to the tyranny of Andros, as brought to notice in another part of this paper, the historian quotes as a saying of his, that "DEMOCRACY IS CHRIST'S GOVERNMENT, IN CHURCH AND STATE."

firmed by the list of subscribers' names printed at the end, with the number of copies annexed. Distinguished laymen in all parts of New England, who were soon to be heralded to the world as heroes in that struggle, are on that list for six, twelve, twenty-four, thirty-six, and two of them for a hundred copies each! As the State itself, in its first organic life on these shores, was born of the church, so our republican form of government is the product of the Congregational church polity; and of all men whom God has honored with an agency in the production, John Wise ranks among the foremost.

A

VINDICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

OF

NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES.

DRAWN FROM ANTIQUITY; THE LIGHT OF NATURE; THE HOLY SCRIPTURES; ITS NOBLE NATURE; AND FROM THE DIGNITY DIVINE PROVIDENCE HAS PUT UPON IT.

By JOHN WISE, A.M.,

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN IPSWICH.

There are none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. — Isaiah 51: 18.

Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi, and to your sisters, Ruhamah. — Hosea 2: 1.

A

VINDICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

OF

THE NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES.

The Constitution of New England Churches, as settled by their Platform, may be fairly justified, from Antiquity; the Light of Nature; Holy Scripture; and from the Noble and Excellent Nature of the Constitution itself. And lastly, from the Providence of God dignifying it.

DEMONSTRATION I.

THE VOICE OF ANTIQUITY.

CHAPTER I.

TO DISTRIBUTE THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN ERA INTO THREE PARTS MAY SERVE TO RAISE A CLEARER LIGHT, AND MAKE A BRIGHTER ASPECT IN THIS ESSAY.

1. THE first division contains the first three hundred years of Christianity, which may be accounted the most refined and purest time, both as to faith and manners, that the Christian church has been honored with; for that within this space, is contained

the ministry of the apostles and holy evangelists, and other eminent persons authorized by them; and such others who succeeded in office-trust through the several ages, within the space before named. This was the time of an immense effusion of the Spirit of God upon the world, when there was such a flux and inundation of the waters from the sanctuary, mentioned Ezek. xlvii. This was the age of miracles; a time of extraordinary gifts, and when grace and true piety was in the greatest elevation. Christian religion was now a dangerous business; every man that took it up, lays down his life, honor, and fortune at stake; he that owns Christ, must bid defiance to all the celebrated deities of the Roman empire; and thereby run counter to the religion of the imperial court. So that rationally we may expect to find the churches of Christ in the purest capacity they were ever in; in all points, both of principles and practice. That whatever their government was if they continue the same from the days of the apostles, we may fairly conclude it to be authentic, and agreeable with their grand and original copy. It is most apparent, that the churches in those ages were under too good an influence internally, and the eye of too direful a guard, externally to prevaricate with God, in the known principles of their order, any more than in their faith, though they were not without errors. Two or three hundred years is a long time in the world to keep up our constant mode and custom, either in religious or civil affairs, amongst men, who are so inclined to err, and apt to change their fashions: *Nam est natura hominum novitatis avida.* That for the churches through those many ages and

in their several communities to agree in their discipline amongst themselves, and not essentially to differ from those churches that were truly apostolical, invincibly infers that their original was divine. But this will appear more plainly when we have made and finished our survey.

2. The second grand division of time contains the space of the next twelve hundred years downward, more or less; within which circuit is included the commencement and progress of a direful apostasy, both as to worship and government in the churches. Some symptoms of these things were rising within the former division of time; but in this they grew a great pace, and to that degree, that the Christian world became a notorious apostate. For as we have it in the idea of the reformation, the great Lord of time allowed a space, wearing the denomination of time, times, and half a time: or, in plainer expressions, twelve hundred and sixty years, in which space all the effects of a horrible apostasy made a very *Gehennon* of that which was called Christendom. And says Dr. Owen (in his preface to the inquiry into the original of the churches), Ambrose judged that it was the pride or ambition of the doctors of the church which introduced the alteration in its order. And, moreover, says the Dr. somewhat after this manner, namely: "The ambition of church rulers in the fourth and fifth centuries openly proclaimed itself, to the scandal of the Christian religion; for that their interest led them to a deviation from the order and discipline of the church according to its first institution." For that the directions given about it in Scripture make it a matter so weighty in itself,

and attended with so many difficulties, it being laid under such severe interdictions of lordly power, or seeking either of wealth or dignity, that it is no pleasant thing to flesh and blood, to engage in the conduct and oversight of Christ's volunteers; to bear with their manners; to exercise patience towards them in all their infirmities; and in all their weaknesses to continue a high valuation for them as the flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. All this requires abundance of self-denial; and if so, then it is no wonder that many of their prelates were willing gradually to extricate themselves out of this uneasy condition, and embrace all opportunities of introducing another order into the churches, that might tend more to the exaltation of their own power and dignity. And this was done accordingly; for the bishops, by their arbitrary rules, shared the flock of Christ amongst themselves, and that without the consent of the people, as though they had conquered them by the sword. For thus they divide the spoil. This bishop, say they, shall have such a share and number of them under his power; and that other bishop shall have so many; and so far shall the jurisdiction of one extend, and so far another, that they soon canton out the whole Roman empire under a few patriarchs and head men. These things were the subject of their decrees and laws, which (those of Christ's being thrown by) were now become a rule for the churches. But yet neither did the bishops long keep within those bounds and limits which their more modest ambition had at first prescribed unto them, but went on, and took occasion from these beginnings to contend amongst them-

selves about preëminency, dignity, and power — in which contest the bishop of Rome at length remained master of the field, and so Rome obtained the second conquest of the world. And then his holiness, the head of it, came to ride admiral of all the Sees, and then soon became lord of heaven and earth by the same rule of process which brought him to his high trust. Hence

Query. What cannot wakeful ambition, learning, and fraud do, if jointly agreed, at rifling the greatest treasures bequeathed to mankind, especially when the world is generally gotten into a sleepy fit?

3. Towards the latter end of this space of time began a glorious reformation. Many famous persons, memorable in ecclesiastical history, being moved by the Spirit of God, and according to Holy Writ, led the way in the face of all danger; such has Wickliff, who openly decried the pope as the very anti-Christ in the fourteenth century, and others in that age. And in the next century Martin Luther pursued the reformation with great boldness, resolution, and constancy. This is that famous Luther, says my author, of whom they who acknowledge the least must yet make as much as Dr. More makes of him; for, saith the Dr., "I cannot think so very highly of Luther as some do; and yet I think him to have been a very happy instrument in the hand of God, for the good of Christendom against the horrid enormities of the papal hierarchy. And though he might not be allowed to be the Elias, the conductor and chariot of Israel, as some have styled him; yet I think at least he might be accounted a faithful postilion in that chariot, who was well accoutred with his wax boots,

oiled coat, and hood; and who turned the horses' noses into a direct way from Babylon toward the city of God, and held on in a good round trot, through thick and thin, not caring to bespatter others in this high fog, as he himself was finely bespattered by others." About which time Zuinglius, Oecolampadius, Melanchthon, and other Christian heroes also listed into the same quarrel, and with great bravery and self-denial went forward with the reformation. Yet after the endeavors of such men, and others without number, through several ages downward, the churches which are called reformed attained to a very imperfect reformation, as Dr. Increase Mather says. And the defect has not been so much in doctrine, as in worship and discipline. And notwithstanding, says the Dr., in this respect also some churches have gone beyond others. Now to come to what I aim at, these churches in New England, as to their order and discipline, have surpassed all churches of the reformation. And under the head of discipline, it seems to me that Christ, the captain of salvation, has given out his word to these churches as to his troops coming up in the rear of time; and his word of command is—as you were; make good the old front, or place yourselves in that regimental order which the primitive churches were in whilst they marched under my banners, and encountered the devil in their heathen persecutors for the first three hundred years—for that the churches in New England and the primitive churches are eminently parallel in their government. Those first ages of the church, it is certain, were many times much annoyed with many pestilent and damnable heresies, and

many usages in worship, too superstitious, crept in amongst them; yet they continued in the constitution of their church order very uniform and apostolical; and it is very obvious that these churches in this wilderness, in the essentials of government, are every way parallel to them.

I shall represent this business by a collection of parallel notes out of several authors of unquestionable veracity; and shall principally follow the guidance of one who has concealed his name, and styles his treatise "An inquiry into the constitution, discipline, unity, and worship of the primitive churches." This author, in his preface, gives this fair account of his doings. Says he, "What I have written I have wholly collected out of the genuine and unquestionably authentic writings of those ages," meaning such as wrote in or of the three first centuries of Christianity. And says he, "I have been every way honest and unbiassed;" and being well assured of his fidelity, I shall endeavor to imitate his faithfulness in transcribing what I find in him suiting my present purpose. And I shall be well and sufficiently furnished when I have laid before the reader the notion which the ancients had of the church in its constituent parts, both of officers and people, with the several authorities, powers, rights, immunities, and prerogatives belonging unto each. And if we find that the primitive churches, in their order and discipline, did exactly agree in the essentials of government with the churches in New England, we may rationally then conclude that if they were apostolical, so are we.

CHAPTER II.

Of the church.

To pass over all other observations, the most usual and common acceptation of the word "church," of which we must chiefly treat, is that of a particular church, which consists of a society of Christians meeting together in one place, under their proper pastors, for the performance of religious worship and the exercising of Christian discipline. This description of a church is agreeable with the idiom both of Scripture and antiquity. Thus Tertullian, who lived about the end of the second century, gives us an account of the state, order, and worship of the churches. (Apol. ad Gen. cap. 39.) The description of a church he first lays down in these words, namely: *Corpus sumus de conscientia religionis, et disciplinæ unitate, et spei fœdere.* We are a body united in the conscience of religion, or for the conscientious observation of the duties of religion, by an agreement in discipline, and in a covenant of hope. For whereas such a body or religious society could not be united but by a covenant, he calls it a covenant of hope, because the principal respect therein was had unto the things hoped for. This religious body or society, thus united by covenant, did meet together in the same assembly or congregation; for, says he, *Corpus sumus, coimus in cœtum, et congregationem ut ad deum*, etc. We are a body, and meet in an assembly and congregation, to offer up our prayers unto God and attend the duties of

the Christian religion. So Irenæus also, in the second century, tells us "that some of the brethren, and sometimes the whole church of some certain place, by fasting and prayer have raised the dead." Thus our own platform agrees in sense with the opinion of the ancients. (Plut. ch. 2, sect. 6.) "A congregational church is, by the institution of Christ, a part of the militant church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body by an holy covenant," etc. But as to the independency, or real distinction between church and church, this will more clearly appear in what follows. Therefore I shall proceed to consider the constituent parts of a church, as divided,

1. Into the people who composed the body of the church, called the elect, or the called and sanctified by the will of God; and sometimes they are called the brethren, because of their brotherly love, etc.

2. Into those persons who were set apart for office, or for a peculiar and ecclesiastical improvement. And each party under this distribution, had their particular immunities and employments. And under these heads, I shall confine the discourse to a parallel in the essentials in government or church order, between the churches of Christ in the first ages of Christianity, and the churches of New England, as settled by their platform.

CHAPTER III.

I shall proceed to distribute and enumerate the operations and immunities of the churches.

I. With relation to the peculiar acts of the officers.

II. The peculiar acts of the laity or fraternity.

III. The joint acts of them both; as performing the work and business of an organic church, or complete corporation. And,

IV. I shall lastly make some observations upon the union of distinct churches, by acts of sisterly fellowship or communion. And hereby I shall complete the parallel, in the essentials of order, between the primitive churches and those of this country.

I. The peculiar acts of the officers or clergy. Under this head might be considered the functions of every particular order and degree of the clergy; which we may say were, according to the purest antiquity, but three, namely, bishops, priests or presbyters, and deacons. I shall principally consider the bishop as the chief officer in trust and dignity, in the primitive church. And in order to it,

1. In general observe, that though there were some distinctions in point of a titular dignity and degree between a bishop and presbyter; yet they were really equal in order, and in the nature of their trust. For that in an ecclesiastical sense, bishop and presbyters are synonymous terms, setting forth the same office; and signify no more but an elder, a pastor, ruler, or overseer of a church. Ignatius calls the apostles themselves the presbyters of the church; and Theodoret renders the reason of the appellation, for, saith

he, "The Holy Scriptures called the chief men of Israel, the senate, or eldership." (Wils. Dict.) And, indeed, according to the apostle himself, presbyters, or elders, and bishops, are plainly terms of office, and of equal signification. As in Tit. 1 : 5, 7 : "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst . . . ordain elders. . . . For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God," etc.

In this discourse I shall represent the bishop in the sense of the primitive churches, as head and chief officer of the church; for, according to Cyprian, there was but one bishop, strictly so called, in a church at a time, though at the same time there were many elders or presbyters in the same church; and the bishop, in a peculiar manner, was related to his flock, as a pastor to his sheep and a parent to his children. (Cyp. Epist. 38, § 1, p. 90.) And the titles of this supreme church officer, are most of them reckoned up in one place, in Cyp. Epist. 96, namely, bishop, pastor, president, governor, superintendent, or priest. And this officer is he, which in the Revelation, is called, The angel of the church, as Origen thinks.

2. We may consider more distinctly the object of his care, or the dimensions of the bishop's diocess. It is very obvious, that this great and superior officer, as has been said, had but one church under his pastoral care. The diocesses, government or dominion of these reverend prelates, are never (according to antiquity) said to contain churches in the plural, but only a church in the singular number. And the bishop was usually called the bishop of this or that church. As Tertullian saith, Polycarp was ordained bishop of the church of Smyrna, etc. And, more-

over, it is accurately to be observed that the most frequent word used to denominate the extent of the bishop's care, or to set out the limits of his diocess, was that of a parish. So in the synodical epistle of Irenæus to Victor. The bishoprics of Asia are called parishes; and in the history of Eusebius, the word is so applied in several hundred places. It is very useful there to read of bishops of this and that parish: as the bishop of the parish in Alexandria, the bishop of the parish in Ephesus, and in Corinth, etc. For that the word *Paroikia*, which we render parish, signifies housing, or living together. And in ordinary and civil use, it notes a village, small town, or part of a town, of people or persons dwelling together. And in a church sense it signifies a competent number of Christians dwelling near together, and having one bishop, pastor or minister, or more, set over them; with whom they meet at one time or place, to worship and serve God. So that parish in this sense, is the same with a particular church or congregation. And this is plainly agreeable with the sense, custom, and platform of New England churches.

3. That the bishop's diocess exceeded not the bounds of a parish, or a small town, or part of a town, is very evident from the following demonstrations, according to antiquity.

Demonstration 1. For that all the people of a diocess did every Sunday meet together in one place to celebrate divine service. Thus saith Justin Martyr (Apol. 2, p. 98), all assemble together in one place, where the bishop preaches and prays.

Demonst. 2. The bishop had but one altar or com-

munion-table in his diocess, at which his whole flock received the sacrament from him. There is but one altar says Ignatius (Epist. ad Phila. p. 41), as there is but one bishop. So says Cyprian, we celebrate the sacrament; the whole brotherhood being present. And thus it was in Justin Martyr's day. The bishop's whole diocess met together on Sunday, when the bishop gave them the eucharist.

Demonst. 3. All the people of a diocess were present at church censures; as Origen describes an offender, as appearing before the whole church, in Mat. tom. 13, p. 133, vol. 1. So Clemens Romanus calls the censures of the church the things commanded by the multitude.

Demonst. 4. No offenders were restored again to the churches' peace, without the knowledge and consent of the whole diocess; they were to plead their cause before the whole people, etc.

Demonst. 5. When the bishop of a church was dead, all the people of that church met together in one place to choose a new bishop. So Sabinus was chosen bishop of Emetria, by the suffrage of all the brotherhood. The whole diocess of the bishops did meet together to manage church affairs. Thus when the schism of Felicissimus, in the bishopric of Carthage was to be debated, it was to be done according to the will of the people, and by the consent of the laity. And when there was some hot disputes about the restitution of the lapsed, Cyprian promised his whole diocess, that all those things should be examined before them, and judged by them. So that from the premises, it is very evident that that diocess cannot possibly be more than one single congrega-

tion; nor that church more than a congregational church, where all the people and members of that church meet together at one time, and in one place, to pray together, to receive the sacrament together, assist at church censures together, and despatch church affairs together. And it is very apparent, that this was the method and way of the primitive churches, according to the preceding observations. And New England churches harmonize exactly in their common practice, as though they had taken their directions from them.

4. The bishop's duty, or the several particular operations of his honorable office, were such as these, namely, preaching of the word, praying with his people, administering the sacraments, taking care of the poor, ordaining of ministers, governing his flock, excommunicating of offenders, and absolving of penitents. In a word, whatever can be comprised under those three general heads of preaching, worship, and government, were parts of the bishop's function and office. And this also is very agreeable with our platform (chap. 10, sect. 8). The power which Christ hath committed to the elders, is to feed and rule the church of God, etc.

CHAPTER IV.

II. The prerogatives, or peculiar immunities of the laity.

The fraternity or body, of the people, had several high immunities inherent in them, and exercised by them as a church. As,

1. Voting and giving their suffrage, for the admission and censure of members. To this purpose before.

2. To the electing their own officers. For when a parish, or bishopric, was vacant through the death of the incumbent, the members of that parish met in church to choose a fit person for his successor, to whom they might commit the care and government of the church. When Alexander was chosen bishop of Jerusalem, it was by compulsion or choice of the members of that church. And so in the church of Rome when their bishop was deceased, all the people met in the church to choose a successor. (Euseb. lib. 6, cap. 28.) Though it is certain that after some time, the aspiring clergy robbed the people of this as well as of other of their rights. As it is well represented by a late worthy anomalous author, writing de Ordinatione, p. 30, *Crescente Paulatim cleri potestate ad se magis indies*, etc. The power of the clergy gradually increasing, they daily drew more new rights to themselves, which they took from the people; thinking that the dignity which they had obtained was not ample enough, if the people had any share with them in elections. Therefore at length snatch or take the whole business into their own hands; the people, through their supine negligence, not much opposing of them. Yet that the people might be hushed into quiet (with much grace) they grant them the favor of beggars, namely, *postulare*, to ask for an officer. But this plundering of the churches falls within the second grand division of time, not within the first three hundred years.

3. Of approbating of ordination. All the people

were consulted, and none were admitted into holy orders without their approbation. As we are assured by Cyprian (Epict. 33), who tells us it was his constant custom, in all ordinations to consult his people, and with their common counsel to weigh the merit of every candidate of the sacred orders.

4. Of deposing of their own officers the way. (p. 96, sect. 2.) For if their bishops proved scandalous and wicked in life, heretical and apostates from the faith, the churches had power to degrade and depose them, and choose others in their room. There is a peculiar example of this kind in a letter from the church of Rome to the church of Corinth, written by Clemens Romanus (Euseb. lib. 3, chap. 14), upon which Dr. Owen makes this observation, namely, that the church of Corinth was fallen into a sinful excess in the deposition of their elders, whom the church of Rome judge to have presided amongst them laudably. But yet in the whole epistle the church of Corinth is nowhere reproved, for assuming an authority to themselves which did not belong to them. It seems what Cyprian afterwards affirmed was then acknowledged, namely, that the right of choosing the worthy, and rejecting the unworthy was in the body of the people. But the Corinthian church is severely reproved for the abuse of their liberty and power (State of Churches, p. 94). Also when two Spanish bishops were deposed by their churches, that the said churches might not seem to act by a power which belonged not to them, they sent into Africa to several bishops to know their judgment thereupon, who being convened in a synod (Ann. Dom. 258), whereof

Cyprian was president, they commended and approved their proceedings; assuring them it was according to the divine law, which was express, that none but those that were holy and blameless, should approach God's altar; that if they had continued to have communicated with their profane bishops, they would have been accessory to their guilt and villany, and would have contradicted those examples and commands in Scripture, which obliged a people to separate from wicked and ungodly ministers, that they had not acted irregularly in what they had done; since the people had the chief power in choosing worthy bishops, so also of refusing those who were unworthy. And many other passages there are in that epistle which flatly assert the people's power of deposing scandalous bishops. Yet where the churches were associated to render their action more unquestionable, they had assistance from others; but yet the power is plainly acknowledged to be inherent in the church. (Epist. 68; Apud. Cyp. sect. 1, 2, 3, p. 200.) These premises are very harmonious with the constitution of these churches. (Plat. ch. 10, sect. 5, 6.) The power which is granted by Christ to the body of the church and brotherhood, is a prerogative.

(1) In choosing their own officers.

(2) In the admission and censures of their own members; and,

(3) In case an elder offend incorrigibly, etc., as they had power to call him to office, so they have power according to order to remove him from his office, etc.

CHAPTER V.

III. The joint acts of officers and people, carrying on, as an organic body.

And these peculiarly refer to the discipline and good government of the church. And though ministerial trust (precisely considered) was solely devolved on the officers, yet still the fraternity stood interested in, and possessed of a share in the judicial part of the government, the whole church in ordinary cases were the judges which composed the ecclesiastical consistory. So that the power of the keys was so lodged both in the bishops and people, as that each had a share to exercise and improve in joint acts of judicature, and thus the clergy and laity conjunctly made up that supreme court which was in every parish, where all church offenders were tried, and when found guilty were sentenced and condemned. That the laity did exercise judicial power in the church, is further evident from several testimonies. As in that of Clemens Romanus (Epist. 1, ad Corinth, p. 69), where he writes, who will say according to the example of Moses. If seditions, contentions, and schisms are happened because of me, I will depart, I will go whithersoever you please, and I will do what shall be enjoined me by the people, so the church of Christ be in peace. So Origen describes a criminal appearing before the whole church. In Mat. tom. 13, Cyprian, when some had committed some great misdemeanors, professes himself not a sufficient judge, but they ought to be tried by all the people. (Epist. 28, p. 64.) And to the same pur-

pose he writes of other delinquents, namely: That such matters should be adjusted according to the arbitrament, and common council of the people. And that the lapsed in admitting them to communion, should plead their cause before the clergy, and before all the people. And concerning such matters he writes to the people, that when it should please God to restore peace to the church, and reduce him from exile, then the case of the delinquents should be examined in their presence, and according to their judgment. And Cyprian writes in another place, that all things were debated in common amongst them. And that whoever was excommunicated, it was by the suffrages of the people. And though the elders were principally concerned, in preparing cases for the churches' cognizance, yet it is plain that the decisive suffrage was (in part) the prerogative of the people. To this purpose we have an instance in some that joined in the schism of Novatus, who being sensible of their fault, came into the presbytery and desired the churches' peace; the presbytery accepted their submission, and proposed it to the whole church, who readily embraced it. Now it is to be observed, that agreeably with the fore-cited practice of the primitive churches, our own platform has decided the question concerning the subject and exercise of government. (Platf. ch. 10, sect. 11.) The ordinary power of government belongs only to the elders; and power of privilege remaineth with the brotherhood (as the power of judgment in matters of censure, and power of liberty in matters of liberty), thence it follows, that in an organic church and right administration, all church acts proceed after the man-

ner of a mixed administration, so that no church act can be consummated or perfected without the consent of both.

CHAPTER VI.

IV. The fellowship and communion that distinct churches had and held one with another.

It is very obvious by this time (and he must blind his own eyes that won't see it), that the primitive churches (according to the account we have of their regimen for the first three hundred years from Christ), were distinct, political bodies; and neither diocesan, national, provincial, nor classical, but properly congregational churches. And as such, were perfect and complete societies incorporate; so that they had a power and capacity of carrying on all church-work within themselves, and wanted not to borrow, or receive from others, for the support of their being, and so were independent. Yet considering they were imperfect in their matter, and therefore to help forward their well-being, wanted the advantage of all good means; with the influence of the grace, love, knowledge, experience, wisdom, and counsel of each other; so they were dependent, and became mutually officious, and accountable to each other: somewhat after the manner, as Mr. Hooker distinguishes on the independency and dependency of gospel churches. (Pol. lib. 2, ch. 3.) Says he, "Independency implies two things. Either,

"1. An absolute supremacy, opposed to subordination; and so a particular church is not independent

it being accountable to civil government, etc. And also to the consociation of churches. Or,

"2. Independency signifies a sufficiency in its kind, for the attainment of its end. And in this sense, independency is opposed to imperfection; and if we take it thus, then a particular church may be said to be independent, it being sufficient to attain the end it was instituted for; it having complete power, when rightly constituted, to exercise all the the ordinances of God. And thus we find, that the primitive churches in this sense were independent churches; that is, every particular church had a sufficient right and power, without the concurrence and authority of any other church, to carry on the worship of God, and exercise of discipline in their distinct society. And yet as they were parts of the universal church, held themselves obliged to suitable communion. And for the support of unity, love, and concord amongst them, and to advise about their common circumstances and condition; and also to regulate their ecclesiastical affairs within their general limits, for their mutual advantage; did therefore form themselves into synodical assemblies, and were governed in common by them; for that their synodical decrees, canons, or institutions, were accounted obligatory to all the churches, who had their representatives in the synods. For, indeed, to what purpose else did they draw up their resolves, but for the good and benefit of the whole community. And it would have been very fruitless to have made wearisome journeys, with great cost and pains to determine such things, as they judged expedient for the churches' well-being, if, after all, it were indiffer-

ent whether they were obeyed or no: or that when the whole was agreed, some should reluct and remonstrate; and especially when things were fairly settled by a joint suffrage in synods, some small set of wise men should hold themselves wiser than whole synods, and afterwards should of their own heads, in their more private apartments, set forward new schemes, which in itself is disorderly, and a way to keep the churches constantly fluctuating, and restless like the unstable ocean. And, indeed, considering the regularity, wisdom, and union in synodical settlements, whilst that all sorts of persons interested, both officers and people having had their full liberty in debates, and their free votes and suffrages, in drawing up the decrees and settlements, it is a bold intrusion, and little better than defying and trampling under foot the unity, love, honor, and authority of the churches, to run counter with synodical settlements, till they are fairly repealed by the like power which made the settlements." And thus we come to consider the members of the synods of the primitive churches.

And these were bishops, presbyters, deacons, and deputed laymen, in behalf of the people of their respective churches. At a great synod at Antioch, which condemned Paulus Samosatenus, there were present bishops, presbyters, deacons, and the church of God; that is laymen, who represented the people of their several churches. (Euseb. l. 7, cap. 30.) Also when the heresy of the Montanists was fixed and preached, the faithful in Asia met together several times to examine it, and upon examination condemned it. (Euseb. lib. 5, cap. 16.) Also there being

some heats in the church of Carthage, about the restitution of the lapsed, Cyprian, bishop of that church, writes from exile, — That there should be convened a synod of bishops, and of the laity, who had stood firm through the persecution, to consult about, and to determine their affairs. (Epist. 14.) And moreover at a great synod held at Carthage, Anno. 258, there were present eighty-seven bishops, together with presbyters and deacons, and a great part of the laity. (Apud Cypri. p. 443.)

The principles of the churches in New England, asserting the right of the people in synodical meetings, are fully set down in the chapter concerning synods. (Platf.) And the practice of these in harmony with the primitive churches has been all along agreeable to it. In the last synod which was in New England, in the year 1679, some churches sent only their elders without their brethren, with which the synod was so far unsatisfied, as that they would not allow those pastors to sit with them until they had prevailed with their churches to send brethren also; being very tender of admitting any thing, that should look like the infringement of that liberty and privilege, which does by the institution of Christ belong to the brotherhood in particular churches. (Dr. Mather's Order, Q. 11.) I shall conclude this head or demonstration with these weighty and solemn words of the learned and famous Mr. Oakes, president of the college, in his election sermon: "Consider," says he, "what will be the end of receding, or making of a defection from the way of church government established amongst us. I profess that I look upon the discovery and settlement of the congregational way,

as the boon, the gratuity, the largeness of divine bounty, which the Lord graciously bestowed on this people, that followed him into this wilderness, and who were separated from their brethren. Those good people who came over had more love, zeal, and affectionate desire of communion with God, in pure worship and ordinances, and did more in order to it, than others; and the Lord did more for them than for any people in the world, in showing them the pattern of his house, and the truer scriptural way of church government and administrations. God was certainly in a more than ordinary way present with his servants in laying our foundations, and in settling church-order, according to the will and appointment of Christ. Consider what will be the sad issue of revolting from the way fixed on to one extreme or to another, whether it be to Presbyterianism or Brownism. As for the Presbyterians, it must be acknowledged that there are amongst them as pious, learned, sober, orthodox men as the world affords; and that there is as much of the power of godliness among that party, and of the spirit of the good old puritans, as among any people in the world. And as for the ways of their church government, it must be confessed, that in the day of it, it was a great step to reformation. The reformation in King Edward's day, was a blessed work; and the reformation of Geneva and Scotland was then a larger step, and in many respects purer than the other. And for my part, I fully believe that the congregational way far exceeds both, and is the highest step that has been taken towards reformation; and for the substance of it, it is the very same way that was estab-

lished and practised in the primitive times, according to the institution of Jesus Christ." Thus ends my first demonstration in a fair parallel drawn up between the holiest churches that ever were in the world, and the churches of New England; and however they may differ in their morals, they are very harmonious in their order. And considering that the former cannot rationally be thought but they derived their constitution from the apostles, and so it must needs be of a divine original: and if so, then these in New England who are fashioned so exactly like them, must needs be of the same pedigree, etc.

But I shall waive all improvement of the premises, and leave the whole to the serious and judicious thoughts of every impartial reader, not doubting but he will find sufficient evidence of the divine original of these churches in what has been said. And that I might now obtain a supersedeas, and forbear adding any further plea in their defence. But yet to gratify my own curiosity, and divert the reader, I shall proceed to inquire into the natural reason of the constitution of those churches we have been comparing. In this question I shall go out of the common road, and take into an unusual and unbeaten path, wherein possibly I may fall into some thickets now and then, and be somewhat entangled; yet I hope the candid reader will afford some succor by his tender clemency, and his friendly interpretation of my good intentions. For though I may in so devious a way, miss of some part of the truth, yet I have a great presumption that I may open a road to men of greater learning, and a deeper search, that will lead to a rich treasure of knowledge and wisdom, for

ease and relief under those many questions and crabbed debates concerning church government in the Christian world; for to me it seems apparent, that, under Christ, the reason of the constitution of these and the primitive churches, is really and truly owing to the original state and liberty of mankind, and founded peculiarly in the light of nature.

DEMONSTRATION II.

FROM THE LIGHT OF NATURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE divine establishment in providence of the forenamed churches, in their order, is apparently the royal assent of the supreme monarch of the churches, to the grave decisions of reason in favor of man's natural state of being and original freedom. For if we should make a new survey of the constitution before named under the brightest light of nature, there is no greater example of natural wisdom in any settlement on earth for the present and future security of human beings in all that is most valuable and grand, than in this. That it seems to me as though wise and provident nature by the dictates of right reason excited by the moving suggestions of humanity; and awed with the just demands of natural liberty, equity, equality, and principles of self-preservation, originally drew up the scheme, and then obtained the royal approbation. And certainly it is agreeable that we attribute it to God, whether we receive it nextly from reason or revelation, for that each is equally an emanation of his wisdom. (Prov. 20: 27.) The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly. There be many larger volumes in this dark recess called the belly, to be read by that candle God has lighted up. And I am very

well assured the fore-named constitution is a transcript out of some of their pages. (John 1: 4, 9.) And the life was the light of men, which lighteth every man which cometh into the world. This admirable effect of Christ's creating power in hanging out so many lights to guide man through a dark world, is as applicable to the light of reason, as to that of revelation. For that the light of reason as a law and rule of right, is an effect of Christ's goodness, care, and creating power, as well as of revelation; though revelation is nature's law in a fairer and brighter edition. This is granted by the London ministers (p. 8, c. 3): "That that which is evident by, and consonant to the true light of nature, or natural reason, is to be accounted *Jure Divino*, in matters of religion." But in the further and more distinct management of this plea, I shall,

I. Lay before the reader several principles of natural knowledge.

II. Apply or improve them in ecclesiastical affairs.

III. Infer from the premises, a demonstration that these churches, if not properly formed, yet are fairly established in their present order by the law of nature.

CHAPTER II.

I. I shall disclose several principles of natural knowledge, plainly discovering the law of nature, or the true sentiments of natural reason, with respect to man's being and government. And in this essay I

shall peculiarly confine the discourse to two heads, namely:

1. Of the natural (in distinction from the civil), and then,

2. Of the civil being of man. And I shall principally take Baron Puffendorff for my chief guide and spokesman.

(1) I shall consider man in a state of natural being, as a free-born subject under the crown of heaven, and owing homage to none but God himself. It is certain civil government in general is a very admirable result of providence, and an incomparable benefit to mankind, yet must needs be acknowledged to be the effect of human free-compacts and not of divine institution; it is the produce of man's reason, of human and rational combinations, and not from any direct orders of infinite wisdom, in any positive law wherein is drawn up this or that scheme of civil government. Government (says Lord Warrington) is necessary . . . in that no society of men can subsist without it; and that particular form of government is necessary which best suits the temper and inclination of a people. Nothing can be God's ordinance, but what he has particularly declared to be such; there is no particular form of civil government described in God's word, neither does nature prompt it. The government of the Jews was changed five times. Government is not formed by nature, as other births or productions; if it were, it would be the same in all countries; because nature keeps the same method, in the same thing, in all climates. If a commonwealth be changed into a monarchy, is it nature that forms and brings forth the monarch? Or if a royal

family be wholly extinct (as in Noah's case, being not heir apparent from descent from Adam) is it nature that must go to work (with the king's bees, who themselves alone preserve the royal race in that empire) to breed a monarch before the people can have a king, or a government sent over them? And thus we must leave the kings to resolve which is their best title to their crowns, whether natural right, or the constitution of government settled by human compacts, under the direction and conduct of reason.

But to proceed under the head of a state of natural being, I shall more distinctly explain the state of human nature in its original capacity, as man is placed on earth by his Maker, and clothed with many investitures and immunities which properly belong to man separately considered. As,

The prime immunity in man's state, is that he is most properly the subject of the law of nature. He is the favorite animal on earth; in that this part of God's image, namely, reason, is congenate with his nature, wherein by a law immutable, enstamped upon his frame, God has provided a rule for men in all their actions, obliging each one to the performance of that which is right, not only as to justice, but likewise as to all other moral virtues, the which is nothing but the dictate of right reason founded in the soul of man. (Molloy, De Mao, Præf.) That which is to be drawn from man's reason, flowing from the true current of that faculty, when unperverted, may be said to be the law of nature, on which account, the Holy Scriptures declare it written on men's hearts. For being endowed with a soul, you may know from

yourself, how, and what you ought to act. (Rom. 2: 14.) These having not a law, are a law to themselves. So that the meaning is, when we acknowledge the law of nature to be the dictate of right reason, we must mean that the understanding of man is endowed with such a power, as to be able, from the contemplation of human condition to discover a necessity of living agreeably with this law; and likewise to find out some principle, by which the precepts of it, may be clearly and solidly demonstrated. The way to discover the law of nature in our own state, is by a narrow watch, and accurate contemplation of our natural condition and propensions. Others say this is the way to find out the law of nature, namely, if a man any way doubts, whether what he is going to do to another man be agreeable to the law of nature, then let him suppose himself to be in that other man's room, and by this rule effectually executed. A man must be a very dull scholar to nature not to make proficiency in the knowledge of her laws. But more particularly in pursuing our condition for the discovery of the law of nature, this is very obvious to view, namely,

(1) A principle of self-love and self-preservation is very predominant in every man's being.

(2) A sociable disposition.

(3) An affection or love to mankind in general.

And to give such sentiments the force of a law, we must suppose a God who takes care of all mankind, and has thus obliged each one, as a subject of higher principles of being than mere instincts. For that all law, properly considered, supposes a capable subject and a superior power, and the law of God which is

binding, is published by the dictates of right reason as other ways. Therefore, says Plutarch, to follow God and obey reason is the same thing. But, moreover, that God has established the law of nature, as the general rule of government, is further illustrable from the many sanctions in providence, and from the peace and guilt of conscience in them that either obey or violate the law of nature. But, moreover, the foundation of the law of nature with relation to government, may be thus discovered, namely: Man is a creature extremely desirous of his own preservation; of himself he is plainly exposed to many wants, unable to secure his own safety and maintenance without assistance of his fellows; and he is also able of returning kindness by the furtherance of mutual good; but yet man is often found to be malicious, insolent, and easily provoked, and as powerful in effecting mischief as he is ready in designing it. Now that such a creature may be preserved, it is necessary that he be sociable; that is, that he be capable and disposed to unite himself to those of his own species, and to regulate himself towards them, that they may have no fair reason to do him harm; but rather incline to promote his interests, and secure his rights and concerns. This then is a fundamental law of nature, that every man as far as in him lies, do maintain a sociableness with others, agreeable with the main end and disposition of human nature in general. For this is very apparent, that reason and society render man the most potent of all creatures. And finally, from the principles of sociableness it follows as a fundamental law of nature, that man is not so wedded to his own interest, but that

he can make the common good the mark of his aim; and hence he becomes capacitated to enter into a civil state by the law of nature; for without this property in nature, namely, sociableness, which is for cementing of parts, every government would soon moulder and dissolve.

The second great immunity of man is an original liberty enstamped upon his rational nature. He that intrudes upon this liberty, violates the law of nature. In this discourse I shall waive the consideration of man's moral turpitude, but shall view him physically as a creature which God has made and furnished essentially with many ennobling immunities, which render him the most august animal in the world, and still, whatever has happened since his creation, he remains at the upper end of nature, and as such is a creature of a very noble character. For as to his dominion, the whole frame of the lower part of the universe is devoted to his use, and at his command; and his liberty under the conduct of right reason is equal with his trust. Which liberty may be briefly considered, internally as to his mind, and externally as to his person.

(1) The native liberty of man's nature implies, a faculty of doing or omitting things according to the direction of his judgment. But in a more special meaning, this liberty does not consist in a loose and ungovernable freedom, or in an unbounded license of acting. Such license is disagreeing with the condition and dignity of man, and would make man of a lower and meaner constitution than brute creatures, who in all their liberties are kept under a better and

more rational government by their instincts. Therefore, as Plutarch says: Those persons only who live in obedience to reason, are worthy to be accounted free: they alone live as they will, who have learned what they ought to will. So that the true natural liberty of man, such as really and truly agrees to him must be understood, as he is guided and restrained by the ties of reason and laws of nature; all the rest is brutal, if not worse.

(2) Man's external personal, natural liberty, antecedent to all human parts or alliances, must also be considered. And so every man must be conceived to be perfectly in his own power and disposal, and not to be controlled by the authority of any other. And thus every man must be acknowledged equal to every man, since all subjection and all command are equally banished on both sides; and considering all men thus at liberty, every man has a prerogative to judge for himself, namely, what shall be most for his behoof, happiness, and well-being.

The third capital immunity belonging to man's nature, is an equality amongst men; which is not to be denied by the law of nature, till man has resigned himself with all his rights for the sake of a civil state, and then his personal liberty and equality is to be cherished and preserved to the highest degree, as will consist with all just distinctions amongst men of honor, and shall be agreeable with the public good. For man has a high valuation of himself, and the passion seems to lay its first foundation (not in pride, but) really in the high and admirable frame and constitution of human nature. The word man, says my

author, is thought to carry somewhat of dignity in its sound; and we commonly make use of this as the most proper and prevailing argument against a rude insulter, namely, I am not a beast or a dog, but am a man as well as yourself. Since, then, human nature agrees equally with all persons, and since no one can live a sociable life with another that does not own or respect him as a man, it follows as a command of the law of nature, that every man esteem and treat another as one who is naturally his equal, or who is a man as well as he. There be many popular or plausible reasons that greatly illustrate this equality, namely, that we all derive our being from one stock, the same common father of the human race. On this consideration, Bœthius checks the pride of the insulting nobility.

Quid genus et proavos strepitis?
Si primordia vestra,
Auteremque deum spectas,
Nullus degener extat
Nisi vitiis pejora fovens,
Proprium deserat orturn.

Fondly our first descent we boast;
If whence at first our breath we drew,
The common springs of life we view,
The airy notion soon is lost.
The Almighty made us equal all;
But he that slavishly complies
To do the drudgery of vice,
Denies his high original.

And also that our bodies are composed of matter, frail, brittle, and liable to be destroyed by thousand accidents; we all owe our existence to the same

method of propagation. The noblest mortal in his entrance on the stage of life, is not distinguished by any pomp, or of passage from the lowest of mankind, and our life hastens to the same general mark. Death observes no ceremony, but knocks as loud at the barriers of the court, as at the door of the cottage. This equality being admitted, bears a very great force in maintaining peace and friendship amongst men. For that he who would use the assistance of others in promoting his own advantage, ought as freely to be at their service when they want his help on the like occasion. One good turn requires another, is the common proverb; for otherwise he must need esteem others unequal to himself, who constantly demands their aid, and as constantly denies his own. And whoever is of this insolent temper, cannot but highly displease those about him, and soon give occasion of the breach of the common peace. It was a manly reproof which Caractacus gave the Romans. *Num si vos omnibus*, etc. What! because you desire to be masters of all men, does it follow therefore that all men should desire to be your slaves, for that it is a command of nature's law, that no man that has not obtained a particular and special right, shall arrogate to himself a larger share than his fellows, but shall admit others to equal privileges with himself. So that the principle of equality in a natural state is peculiarly transgressed by pride, which is, when a man without sufficient reason prefers himself to others. And though as Hensius paraphrases upon Aristotle's politics to this purpose, namely: Nothing is more suitable to nature, than that those who excel in understanding and prudence,

should rule and control those who are less happy in those advantages, etc. Yet we must note, that there is room for an answer, namely, that it would be the greatest absurdity to believe, that nature actually invests the wise with a sovereignty over the weak; or with a right of forcing them against their wills; for that no sovereignty can be established, unless some human deed or covenant precede. Nor does natural fitness for government make a man presently governor over another; for that as Ulpian says, by a natural right all men are born free, and nature having set all men upon a level and made them equals, no servitude or subjection can be conceived without inequality; and this cannot be made without usurpation or force in others, or voluntary compliance in those who resign their freedom, and give away their degree of natural being. And thus we come,

2. To consider man in a civil state of being, wherein we shall observe the great difference between a natural and political state; for in the latter state many great disproportions appear, or at least many obvious distinctions are soon made amongst men, which doctrine is to be laid open under a few heads.

(1) Every man, considered in a natural state, must be allowed to be free and at his own disposal; yet to suit man's inclinations to society, and in a peculiar manner to gratify the necessity he is in of public rule and order, he is impelled to enter into a civil community, and divests himself of his natural freedom, and puts himself under government, which, amongst other things, comprehends the power of life and death over him, together with authority to enjoin

him some things to which he has an utter aversion, and to prohibit him other things for which he may have as strong an inclination — so that he may be often, under this authority, obliged to sacrifice his private for the public good; so that though man is inclined to society, yet he is driven to a combination by great necessity. For that the true and leading cause of forming governments and yielding up natural liberty, and throwing man's equality into a common pile to be new cast by the rules of fellowship, was really and truly to guard themselves against the injuries men were liable to interchangeably; for none so good to man as man, and yet none a greater enemy. So that,

(2) The first human subject and original of civil power is the people; for as they have a power every man over himself in a natural state, so upon a combination they can and do bequeathe this power unto others, and settle it according as their united discretion shall determine. For that this is very plain, that when the subject of sovereign power is quite extinct, that power returns to the people again. And when they are free, they may set up what species of government they please; or if they rather incline to it, they may subside into a state of natural being, if it be plainly for the best. In the Eastern country of the Mogul, we have some resemblance of the case, for upon the death of an absolute monarch, they live so many days without a civil head; but in that interregnum those who survive the vacancy are glad to get into a civil state again, and usually they are in a very bloody condition when they return under the covert of a new monarch; this project is to endear

the people to a tyranny, from the experience they have so lately had of an anarchy.

(3) The formal reason of government is the will of a community yielded up and surrendered to some other subject, either of one particular person or more, conveyed in the following manner.

Let us conceive in our mind a multitude of men, all naturally free and equal, going about voluntarily to erect themselves into a new commonwealth. Now. their condition being such, to bring themselves into a politic body they must needs enter into divers covenants.

1. They must interchangeably each man covenant to join in one lasting society, that they may be capable to concert the measures of their safety, by a public vote.

2. A vote or decree must then nextly pass to set up some particular species of government over them. And if they are joined in their first compact upon absolute terms to stand to the decision of the first vote concerning the species of government, then all are bound by the majority to acquiesce in that particular form thereby settled, though their own private opinions incline them to some other model.

3. After a decree has specified the particular form of government, then there will be need of a new covenant, whereby those on whom sovereignty is conferred engage to take care of the common peace and welfare; and the subjects, on the other hand, to yield them faithful obedience; in which covenant is included that submission and union of wills by which a state may be conceived to be but one person. So

that the most proper definition of a civil state is this, namely: A civil state is a compound moral person, whose will (united by those covenants before passed) is the will of all, to the end it may use and apply the strength and riches of private persons towards maintaining the common peace, security, and well-being of all, which may be conceived as though the whole state was now become but one man; in which the aforesaid covenants may be supposed, under God's providence, to be the divine fiat pronounced by God, "Let us make man." And by way of resemblance the aforesaid being may be thus anatomized.

(1) The sovereign power is the soul infused, giving life and motion to the whole body.

(2) Subordinate officers are the joints by which the body moves.

(3) Wealth and riches are the strength.

(4) Equity and laws are the reason.

(5) Counsellors the memory.

(6) *Salus Populi*, or the happiness of the people is the end of its being, or main business to be attended and done.

(7) Concord amongst the members and all estates, is the health.

(8) Sedition is sickness, and civil war death.

4. The parts of sovereignty may be considered thus: —

(1) As it prescribes the rule of action, it is rightly termed legislative power.

(2) As it determines the controversies of subjects by the standard of those rules, so is it justly termed judiciary power.

(3) As it arms the subjects against foreigners, or forbids hostility, so it is called the power of peace and war.

(4) As it takes in ministers for the discharge of business, so it is called the right of appointing magistrates. So that all great officers and public servants must needs owe their original to the creating power of sovereignty; so that those whose right it is to create may dissolve the being of those who are created, unless they cast them into an immortal frame, and yet must needs be dissoluble if they justly forfeit their being to their creators.

(5) The chief end of civil communities is, that men thus conjoined may be secured against the injuries they are liable to from their own kind; for if every man could secure himself singly, it would be great folly for him to renounce his natural liberty, in which every man is his own king and protector.

(6) The sovereign authority, besides that it inheres in every state as in a common and general subject, so further according as it resides in some one person, or in a council (consisting of some select persons, or of all the members of a community) as in a proper and particular subject, so it produceth different forms of commonwealths, namely, such as are either simple and regular, or mixed.

The forms of a regular state are three only, which forms arise from the proper and particular subject in which the supreme power resides. As,

1. A democracy, which is when the sovereign power is lodged in a council consisting of all the members, and where every member has the privilege

of a vote. This form of government appears in the greatest part of the world to have been the most ancient. For that reason seems to show it to be most probable, that when men (being originally in a condition of natural freedom and equality) had thoughts of joining in a civil body, would without question be inclined to administer their common affairs by their common judgment, and so must necessarily, to gratify that inclination, establish a democracy; neither can it be rationally imagined that fathers of families, being yet free and independent, should in a moment or little time take off their long delight in governing their own affairs, and devolve all upon some single sovereign commander; for that it seems to have been thought more equitable that what belonged to all should be managed by all, when all had entered by compact into one community. The original of our government, says Plato (speaking of the Athenian commonwealth),was taken from the equality of our race. Other states there are composed of different blood, and of unequal lines, the consequences of which are disproportionable sovereignty, tyrannical or oligarchical sway, under which men live in such a manner as to esteem themselves partly lords, and partly slaves to each other. But we and our countrymen, being all born brethren of the same mother, do not look upon ourselves to stand under so hard a relation as that of lords and slaves; but the parity of our descent inclines us to keep up the like parity by our laws, and to yield the precedency to nothing but to superior virtue and wisdom. And moreover, it seems very manifest that most civil communities arose at first from the union

of families that were nearly allied in race and blood; and though ancient story makes frequent mention of kings, yet it appears that most of them were such that had an influence rather in persuading than in any power of commanding. So Justin describes that kind of government as the most primitive which Aristotle styles an heroical kingdom, namely, such as is noways inconsistent with a democratical state. De princip. Reru. 1, l. 1, c.

A democracy is then erected, when a number of free persons do assemble together in order to enter into a covenant for uniting themselves in a body; and such a preparative assembly hath some appearance already of a democracy; it is a democracy in embryo, properly in this respect, that every man hath the privilege freely to deliver his opinion concerning the common affairs. Yet he who dissents from the vote of the majority is not in the least obliged by what they determine, till by a second covenant a popular form be actually established; for not before then can we call it a democratical government, namely, till the right of determining all matters relating to the public safety is actually placed in a general assembly of the whole people; or by their own compact and mutual agreement, determine themselves the proper subject for the exercise of sovereign power. And to complete this state, and render it capable to exert its power to answer the end of a civil state, these conditions are necessary.

(1) That a certain time and place be assigned for assembling.

(2) That when the assembly be orderly met, as to

time and place, that then the vote of the majority must pass for the vote of the whole body.

(3) That magistrates be appointed to exercise the authority of the whole for the better despatch of business of every day's occurrence, who also may, with more mature diligence, search into more important affairs; and if in case any thing happens of greater consequence, may report it to the assembly, and be peculiarly serviceable in putting all public decrees into execution, because a large body of people is almost useless in respect of the last service, and of many others as to the more particular application and exercise of power. Therefore it is most agreeable with the law of nature, that they institute their officers to act in their name and stead.

2. The second species of regular government is an aristocracy, and this is said then to be constituted when the people or assembly, united by a first covenant, and having thereby cast themselves into the first rudiments of a state, do then by common decree devolve the sovereign power on a council consisting of some select members; and these having accepted of the designation, are then properly invested with sovereign command, and then an aristocracy is formed.

3. The third species of a regular government is a monarchy, which is settled when the sovereign power is conferred on some one worthy person. It differs from the former, because a monarch, who is but one person in natural as well as in moral account, and so is furnished with an immediate power of exercising sovereign command in all instances of government;

but the forenamed must needs have particular time and place assigned, but the power and authority is equal in each.

Mixed governments, which are various and of divers kinds (not now to be enumerated), yet possibly the fairest in the world is that which has a regular monarchy, settled upon a noble democracy as its basis; and each part of the government is so adjusted by pacts and laws that render the whole constitution an elysium. It is said of the British empire, that it is such a monarchy as that, by the necessary subordinate concurrence of the lords and commons in the making and repealing all statutes or acts of parliament, it hath the main advantages of an aristocracy and of a democracy, and yet free from the disadvantages and evils of either. It is such a monarchy as, by most admirable temperament, affords very much to the industry, liberty, and happiness of the subject, and reserves enough for the majesty and prerogative of any king who will own his people as subjects, not as slaves. It is a kingdom that, of all the kingdoms of the world, is most like to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, whose yoke is easy and burden light. (Present state of England, Part I. pp. 64.) Thus having drawn up this brief scheme concerning man, and the nature of civil government he is become sole subject of, I shall proceed to make improvements of the premises to accommodate the main subject under our consideration.

II. I shall now make some improvement of the foregoing principles of civil knowledge, fairly deduced from the law of nature. And I shall peculiarly refer

to ecclesiastical affairs, whereby we may in probability discover more clearly the kind, and something of the nature of that government which Christ has placed in and over his church. The learned debates of men, and divine writ sometimes seems to cast such a grandeur on the church and its officers, as though they stood in peerage with civil empire. (Rev. 1: 6, 9. 1 Pet. 2: 9. 1 Cor. 4: 8. 12: 28. 2 Cor. 10: 8.) But all such expressions must needs be otherwise interpreted. God is the highest cause that acts by council; and it must needs be altogether repugnant, to think he should forecast the state of this world by no better a scheme, than to order two sovereign powers, in the same grand community, which would be like placing two suns in the firmament, which would be to set the universe into a flame. That should such an error happen, one must needs be forthwith extinguished, to bring the frame of nature into a just temper and keep it out of harm's way. But to proceed with my purpose I shall go back upon the civil scheme, and inquire after two things: first, of rebellion against government in general, and then in special; whether any of the aforesaid species of regular government can be predicable of the church of God on earth.

1. In general, concerning rebellion against government for particular subjects to break in upon regular communities duly established, is from the premises to violate the law of nature, and is a high usurpation upon the first grand immunities of mankind. Such rebels in states, and usurpers in churches affront the world, with a presumption that the best of the brotherhood are a company of fools, and that themselves

have fairly monopolized all the reason of human nature. Yea, they take upon them the boldness to assume a prerogative of trampling under foot the natural original equality and liberty of their fellows; for to push the proprietors of settlements out of possession of their old, and impose new schemes upon them, is virtually to declare them in a state of vassalage, or that they were born so; and therefore will the usurper be so gracious as to insure them they shall not be sold at the next market. They must esteem it a favor, for by this time all the original prerogatives of man's nature are intentionally a victim, smoking to satiate the usurpers' ambition. It is a very tart observation on an English monarch, and where it may by proportion be applied to a subject must needs sink very deep, and serve for evidence under this head. It is in the secret history of K. *C.* 2, and K. *J.* 2, p. 2, says my author, where the constitution of a nation is such, that the laws of the land are the measures both of the sovereign's commands, and the obedience of the subjects, whereby it is provided; that as the one are not to invade what by concessions and stipulations is granted to the ruler, so the other is not to deprive them of their lawful and determined rights and liberties; then the prince who strives to subvert the fundamental laws of the society is the traitor and the rebel, and not the people, who endeavor to preserve and defend their own. It is very applicable to particular men in their rebellions or usurpations in church or state.

2. In special I shall now proceed to inquire, whether any of the aforesaid species of regular, unmixed governments, can with any good show of rea-

son be predicable of the church of Christ on earth. If the churches of Christ, as churches, are either the object or subject of a sovereign power intrusted in the hands of men, then most certainly one of the forecited schemes of a perfect government will be applicable to it.

Before I pursue the inquiry, it may not be improper to pause, and make some caution here, by distinguishing between that which may have some resemblance of civil power and the thing itself, and so the power of churches is but a faint resemblance of civil power; it comes in reality nothing near to the thing itself; for the one is truly coercive, the other persuasive; the one is sovereign power, the other is delegated and ministerial. But not to delay, I shall proceed with my inquiry, and therein shall endeavor to humor the several great claimers of government in the church of Christ. And,

(1) I shall begin with a monarchy. It is certain, his holiness, either by reasonable pleas, or powerful cheats, has assumed an absolute and universal sovereignty; this fills his cathedral chair, and is adorned with a triple crown, and in defence thereof does protest, The Almighty has made him both key-keeper of heaven and hell, with the adjacent territories of purgatory, and vested in him an absolute sovereignty over the Christian world. And his right has so far prevailed, that princes and civil monarchs hold their crowns and donations as his dutiful sons and loyal subjects; he therefore decks himself with the spoils of the divine attributes, styling himself our Lord God, *optimum, maximum et supremum numen in terris;* a God on earth, a visible deity, and that his

power is absolute, and his wisdom infallible. And many of the great potentates of the earth have paid their fealty, as though it was really so. One of them clad in canvas, going barefoot in the depth of winter (in obedience to the decree, stinting the penance in proportion to the wickedness of princes), has waited many days for absolution at his pious gates. Another has thrown himself down prostrate a humble penitent before him; he has placed his holy foot on the monarch's profane neck as crushing a vermin, crawling out of the stable of his sovereignty; and others frequently kiss his toes with very profound devotion. These and such like triumphant signals of his sovereign power does he wear. And indeed, if he is the universal monarch of the catholic church, princes that are members of it must needs knock under; for that in one world there cannot possibly be two Most High's, any more than two Infinites. Thus you see the clergy, or gospel ministry of the Christian world have so wisely handled business, and managed the gospel, that they have fairly (as they avouch) found a sovereign power bequeathed in it to the ministry of Christ, and rummaging more warily and nicely, at last found a spiritual monarch, very completely furnished with the keys of all sorts of power hanging at his girdle; and may we not pronounce the wiser they! Seeing the world growing weary of religion, was willing to loll itself down to sleep, and leave them in sole trust with the whole interest of God's kingdom. But the sad inquiry is, whether this sort of government has not plainly subverted the design of the gospel, and the end for which Christ's government was

ordained, namely, the moral, spiritual, and eternal happiness of men?

But I have no occasion to pursue this remark with tedious demonstrations: it is very plain it is written with blood in capital letters, to be read at midnight by the flames of Smithfield, and other such like consecrated fires. That the government of this ecclesiastical monarch has, instead of sanctifying, absolutely debauched the world, and subverted all good Christianity in it. So that without the least show of any vain presumption we may infer, that God and wise nature were never propitious to the birth of this monster.

(2) An aristocracy which places the supreme power in a select company of choice persons. Here I freely acknowledge were the gospel ministry established the subject of this power, namely, to will and do, in all church affairs without control, etc., this government might do to support the church in its most valuable rights, etc. If we could be assured they would make the Scripture, and not their private will the rule of their personal and ministerial actions; and, indeed, upon these terms any species of government might serve the great design of redemption; but considering how great an interest is embarked, and how frail a bottom we trust, though we should rely upon the best of men, especially if we remember what is in the hearts of good men (namely, much ignorance, abundance of small ends, many times cloaked with a high pretence in religion; pride skulking and often breeding revenge upon a small affront, and blown up by a pretended zeal, yet really and

truly by nothing more divine than interest or ill nature), and also considering how very uncertain we are of the real goodness of those we esteem good men; and also how impossible it is to secure the entail of it to successors; and also if we remind how Christianity, by the aforesaid principle, has been peeled, robbed and spoiled already, it cannot consist with the light of nature to venture again upon such perils, especially if we can find a safer way home.

It is very plain (allowing me to speak emblematically) the primitive constitution of the churches was a democracy, as appears by the foregoing parallel. But after the Christian churches were received into the favor of the imperial court, under the dominion of Constantine the Great, there being many preliminaries which had furnished the ministers with a disposition thereunto, they quickly deprived the fraternities of their rights in the government of the churches, when they were once provided of a plentiful maintenance through the liberality of Constantine, that when Christianity was so luxuriantly treated, as by his great bounty and noble settlement, it is said there was a voice heard from heaven, saying, Now is poison poured into the church. But the subversion of the constitution is a story too long now to tell. Take, therefore, part of it, out of a late author well versed in antiquity, which may give some brief image of the whole.

Non multa secula jus plebis illæsum mansit, neque aliter evenire potuit, quin illud, vel amittatur, vel saltem diminuatur, etc. (De Ordina; Diff. Historica, p. 36, 40, 41.)

The right of the people did not remain unhurt through many ages; neither could it well be otherways, but that it must be lost, or much diminished. Zenaras does confess that heretofore bishops were chosen by the suffrage of the people. But many seditions happening among them, it was decreed that every bishop should hereafter be chosen by the authority of the bishops of every province. The cause seemed to be so very specious that nothing could be more decent, or more conducive to the safety of the commonwealth.

Yet (says my author) if you do well weigh the business, you must needs acknowledge nothing could have happened more pernicious or destructive to the church of God. For soon after these things came to pass, it is very obvious, that tyranny over the consciences of the faithful, and an intolerable pride everywhere grew rampant among the guides of the church. Yet there was one thing still very needful to be done, and that was to establish or confirm the power which the metropolitans and bishops had acquired to themselves. Therefore they fell to it tooth and nail to drive away the fraternity from all interest in elections. And alas, poor hearts! they began to sleep with both ears; that then was scarce any enemy left to interrupt, or control the conquerors. This was the manner of the clergy till they had made themselves the subjects of all power and then acted arbitrarily, and did what they pleased in the church of God.

But let the learned, knowing world, consider what the issue of all this was, namely, what a wretched capacity the drowsiness and cowardice of the people,

and the usurpation and ambition of the ministry brought the professing world into. If those who were truly godly on both sides had in a few ages looked down from heaven, and had eyed the following centuries, they might have beheld a world of matter for sorrowful impressions; to think that they themselves had occasioned the ruin of millions, by their remiss and passive temper in one sort; and too much humoring and nourishing pride, and high conceits of themselves and others, in the other; when as if they had stood firm to the government as left settled by the apostles, they had certainly prevented an apostasy that has damned and confounded a great part of about thirty generations of men, women, and children. That for my own part I can upon experience, in some measure, truly say (to the history of the primitive churches in the loss of their government, and the consequences which followed, when I am impelled to repeat it to myself) as one Eneas said to Queen Dido,

"Infandum regina jubes renovare dolorem
——— Quis talia fando
Temperet e lacrimis!" ———

So doleful a contemplation is it to think the world should be destroyed by those men, who by God were ordained to save it!

In a word, an aristocracy is a dangerous constitution in the church of Christ, as it possesses the presbytery of all church power. What has been observed sufficiently evinces it. And not only so but from the nature of the constitution, for it has no more barrier to it, against the ambition, insults, and

arbitrary measures of men, than an absolute monarchy. But to abbreviate, it seems most agreeable with the light of nature, that if there be any of the regular government settled in the church of God, it must needs be,

(3) A democracy. This is a form of government which the light of nature does highly value, and often directs to as most agreeable to the just and natural prerogatives of human beings. This was of great account in the early times of the world. And not only so, but upon the experience of several thousand years, after the world had been tumbled and tost from one species of government to another, at a great expense of blood and treasure, many of the wise nations of the world have sheltered themselves under it again, or at least have blended and balanced their governments with it.

It is certainly a great truth, namely, that man's original liberty after it is resigned (yet under due restrictions) ought to be cherished in all wise governments; or otherwise a man in making himself a subject, he alters himself from a freeman into a slave, which to do is repugnant to the law of nature. Also the natural equality of men amongst men must be duly favored; in that government was never established by God or nature, to give one man a prerogative to insult over another, therefore, in a civil, as well as in a natural state of being, a just equality is to be indulged so far as that every man is bound to honor every man, which is agreeable both with nature and religion, (1 Pet. 2: 17); Honor all men. The end of all good government is to cultivate humanity, and promote the happiness of all, and the good of every

man in all his rights, his life, liberty, estate, honor, etc., without injury or abuse done to any. Then certainly it cannot easily be thought that a company of men, that shall enter into a voluntary compact, to hold all power in their own hands, thereby to use and improve their united force, wisdom, riches, and strength for the common and particular good of every member, as is the nature of a democracy; I say it cannot be that this sort of constitution will so readily furnish those in government with an appetite, or disposition to prey upon each other, or embezzle the common stock, as some particular persons may be apt to do when set off and intrusted with the same power. And, moreover, this appears very natural, that when the aforesaid government or power, settled in all, when they have elected certain capable persons to minister in their affairs, and the said ministers remain accountable to the assembly, these officers must needs be under the influence of many wise cautions from their own thoughts (as well as under confinement by their commission) in their whole administration. And from thence it must needs follow that they will be more apt and inclined to steer right for the main point, namely, the peculiar good and benefit of the whole, and every particular member fairly and sincerely. And why may not these stand for very rational pleas in church order?

For certainly if Christ has settled any form of power in his church he has done it for his churches' safety, and for the benefit of every member. Then he must needs be presumed to have made choice of that government as should least expose his people to hazard, either from the fraud or arbitrary measures

of particular men. And it is as plain as daylight, there are no species of government like a democracy to attain this end. There are but about two steps from an aristocracy to a monarchy, and from thence but one to a tyranny; an able standing force, and an ill-nature, *ipso facto*, turns an absolute monarch into a tyrant; this is obvious among the Roman Cæsars, and through the world. And all these direful transmutations are easier in church affairs (from the different qualities of things) than in civil states. For what is it that cunning and learned men cannot make the world swallow as an article of their creed, if they are once invested with an uncontrollable power, and are to be the standing orators to mankind in matters of faith and obedience? Indeed, some very wise and learned men are pleased to inveigh and reproach the notion of a democracy in the church, which makes the *cetu fidelium* or community of the faithful the first subject of the power of government. This they say tends to Brownism, and abhorred anarchy, and then say they upon such premises, it must needs follow that every member of the body must be an officer; and then every one must preach and dispense the sacraments, etc.

Reply. Certainly such gentlemen either design to pose and baffle their reader with fallacy, or they themselves never took up, or understood the true ideas of the several species of government; in that a democracy is as regular a form, and as particular as any other. For,

1. An absolute or limited monarch cannot manage the power or government devolved upon him, without the great officers of the crown, or a large set of

ministers; though possibly he may with the quicker despatch issue out his degrees, yet he must execute all by his ministry. And why may not a democracy be indulged the same liberty? And this will prevent all anarchy or confusion most apparently. But,

2. The bitter pill to swallow in this doctrine of a democracy in the church, is the terrible power of life and death; or the accountableness of particular members to the assembly, and especially those in the ministry; but yet this is agreeable with the nature of the constitution, and easily managed without anarchy or popular confusion also, which would be made very evident, if we should but run the parallel in all points between the democracy of the state and church. But from the premises, I shall

III. Infer, that if these churches are not properly formed, yet are fairly established in their present order by the law of nature. And will they be advised, I would exhort them to try who will be so bold as to dare to disseize them. A monarchy has been tried in the church with a witness, but it has absolutely failed us. An aristocracy in a deep calm threw the democracy overboard, and took not only the helm in hand, but seized ship and cargo as their right and title; but after some time brought all to shipwreck, and that in a good harbor too.

A democracy was the noble government which beat out in all the bad weather of ten bloody persecutions under the management of antiquity. And this is our constitution, and why cannot we be pleased? This constitution is as agreeable with the light and laws of nature as any other whatsoever, as has been

fairly laid down and fully evinced, and more accommodated to the concerns of religion than any other. Therefore, I shall now conclude my demonstration with this brief appeal to the common reason of mankind, namely:

How can it consist with the honorable terms man holds upon here on earth; that the best sort of men that we can find in the world, such men as are adorned with a double set of ennobling immunities, the first from nature, the other from grace; that these men when they enter into charter-party to manage a trade for heaven, must *ipso facto* be clapped under a government that is arbitrary and despotic; yea that carries the plain symptoms of a tyranny in it, when the light of nature knows of a better species, and frequently has made use of it? It wants no further demonstration, for it is most apparent, that nature is so much mistress of herself, that man in a natural state of being, is under God the first subject of all power, and therefore can make his own choice, and by deliberate compacts settles his own conditions for the government of himself in a civil state of being. And when a government so settled shall throw itself from its foundations, or the subjects of sovereign power shall subvert or confound the constitution, they then degrade themselves; and so all power returns again to the people, who are the first owners. And what! Is man become so unfortunate, degraded, and debased, as to be without all power in settling a government over himself, relating to the matters of his eternal well-being? Or when he comes back to a father's house, must he fall into the capacity of a mere passive being, and be put under such tutors, as

can easily turn tyrants over him, and no relief left for him in his own hands; this is certainly most repugnant to the light of nature, and very disagreeable with the liberty and free genius of a gospel state. Nay, in a word, if the government of the churches be settled by God, either in the hands of a church monarch, or aristocracy, and the people are noways the subject of church-power; nay, if they are not under Christ, the fountain of power, then the Reformation, so called, is but a mere cheat, a schism, and notorious rebellion; neither is there room left for the least palliation or shadow of excuse, for the reformers in renouncing their obedience to their public governors. And the Martyrologies which pretend to immortalize the fame of eminent heroes, must be changed into chronicles, handling along an account of the just and deserved fate of a crew of rebels against God and government; for what business had such a company of illiterate and crack-brained fellows to meddle with their rulers, or examine into their administrations? For if they have no right of power in government, they stand absolutely bound to yield a passive obedience and non-resistance; and if they are so hardy and daring as to oppose their lawful rulers, the sharpest penalty in this world, is too easy for them; the inquisition is but dallying and playing with them, hell is their desert. But how it comes about that a state of grace, when in want of a suitable government, is become such a vassal, and wise and cunning nature is by her Creator intrusted, and adorned with more ennobling prerogatives, I must leave, and resign unto those learned men to solve, who plead for an aristocracy in the churches of Christ.

But to wind up the whole discourse in a few words, I acknowledge many objections may be here made, and several questions of moment might here fall under debate; but having obtained what I have principally sought for, in traversing the paths of nature, in the three following particulars; therefore with them, and with one objection answered; and also with some brief improvement of the grand hypothesis in this demonstration, I shall finish the argument.

1. Three particulars; or so many golden maxims, securing the honor of congregational churches.

Particular 1. That the people or fraternity under the gospel, are the first subject of power; or else religion sinks the dignity of human nature into a baser capacity with relation to ecclesiastical, than it is in, in a natural state of being with relation to civil government.

Particular 2. That a democracy in church or state, is a very honorable and regular government according to the dictates of right reason. And, therefore,

Particular 3. That these churches of New England, in their ancient constitution of church order, it being a democracy, are manifestly justified and defended by the law and light of nature.

2. The objection. The plea from the law of nature for a democracy in the church, is as forcible for any other species of government; because nature is furnished with such a variety of schemes as has been pleaded to. And why may not the wise Christian nations take which likes them best?

Answer. We must distinguish between man left solely to the direction of the law of nature, and as

the subject of revelation, wherein divine wisdom may interpose; and determine on some particular species, without hurting or crossing the law of nature. Therefore,

(1) I readily grant and acknowledge, a Christian people may settle what species of government they please, when they are solely left to determine by the law of nature, what government in the church they will have. But then we must remember, that by the argument or concession, the power is originally in the people; and then our own case is secure and safe enough; both on the account of the reversion of power, and especially, for that the people the first subjects of power, have been pleased to settle a democracy for their government, in the churches of this country. And if after the peaceable possession of about an hundred years, any persons can persuade them to alter their government into any other species, this will be less worthy of blame, than craftily, or unfairly to force it out of their hands.

(2) It is granted, that according to the light of nature there be various regular models of government, but if divine wisdom is pleased to interpose and overrule nature's agitations, and cast the scales for this or that particular form, nature will be but fair-mannered to submit to its author and rector; so that if we find that God has disclosed his mind by revelation that his churches be the subjects of a democracy, then all stand obliged to comply under a double bond. And so we come under a proper crisis to inquire in the next place for Scripture evidence in the justification of these churches.

But before I proceed to it, I shall

3. Make some brief improvement of the main hypothesis in the demonstration — that is to say, if the government of the gospel churches be a democracy, these consequences must necessarily follow, namely:

1st *Consequence.* That the right of convoking councils ecclesiastical is in the churches.

2d *Cons.* That such a council has only consultative, not a juridical power in it. A juridical power committed to such a representative body is both needless and also dangerous to the distinct and perfect states they derive from. Complete states settled upon a body of immutable and imperial laws as its basis, may want council; but to create a new subject of juridical power, is some way to endanger the being of the creators.

3d *Cons.* That all the members of an ecclesiastical council, deriving from a democracy, are subjects of equal power. Whatever the power is, the several delegates must, from the nature of the government they derive from, be equal sharers in it. Democratical states, in their representative body, can make but one house, because they have but one subject of supreme power in their nature, and therefore their delegates, let them be who or what they may be, are under equal trust — so that none can justly claim superiority over their fellows, or pretend to a higher power in their suffrage. Indeed in such kingdoms, where the sovereign power is distributed and settled in divers subjects, that the balance of power may be more even, for the safety of the whole, and of all parts under all acts of sovereign power. From such a settlement of power, there arises several distinct

states in the same government, which when convened as one subject of sovereign power, they make different houses in their grand sessions; and so one house or state can negative another. But in every distinct house of these states, the members are equal in their vote: the most ayes make the affirmative vote, and most noes the negative. They do not weigh the intellectual furniture, or other distinguishing qualifications of the several voters, in the scales of the golden rule of fellowship; they only add up the ayes and the noes, and so determine the suffrage of the house.

DEMONSTRATION III.

FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THIS plea has, with such variety of argument and illustration, and by many repetitions, been pursued by a great number of persons eminent for learning and piety, that I might here very fairly release myself from this task. But yet, to complete the number of my arguments, I will briefly sum up the demonstration for the reader's use under a few heads.

I. It must needs be allowed, as a fundamental principle relating to government, that (under God) all power is originally in the people. No man, I think, will deny it to be a very sound principle in civil knowledge. But if any man will, I imagine it is sufficiently set forth in the former demonstration. And it is very plain that religion does always cultivate and increase, rather than diminish, any of nature's just prerogatives; that it must needs stand for a paradox, or a riddle not to be expounded, if man is more of a slave by his religion than by his nature. But let us take a brief view of man by Scripture account under a religious notion, as the subject of grace, and he seems then not to have the least speck of vassalage in him, but is represented as though lord of himself, and owner of heaven and earth both, 1. Cor. 3: 22 — all are yours.

And though it is very certain that man has greatly

debased himself by his apostasy, yet still God puts abundance of honor upon him in his reduction. As we may consider man in a remark or two, under the measures of divine grace in restoring him to favor. First, God treats him as a creature of a very honorable character, as free and at his own disposal, or as though he were some high and mighty state placed at the top of this globe; therefore he courts him into an alliance as though he were likely to yield great honor to the crown. "We are ambassadors — as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God," — 2 Cor. 5: 20. This is much the tenor of God's heralds in their addresses of capitulation. That certainly if God did not highly estimate man as a creature exalted by his reason, liberty, and nobleness of nature, he would not caress him as he does in order to his submission, but rather with some peevish and haughty monarch, or the bloody Mahomet, send his demands at the mouth of his cannon. But instead of such harsh measures, they are treated with the highest reason, attended with lenity and great acts of condescension. Nay, divine menaces are frequently clothed with such soft language as this: "Turn ye, turn ye! why will ye die!" Yea, under all impulsive means which God wisely and graciously makes use of to gain man's consent, he sets the will to turn about itself without forcing it, that so man's religion may be the free and candid emanations of his noble and exalted nature. But when God has thus gained man, may we rationally imagine that in erecting his trophies, he will assign and make him over to some petty and arbitrary potentates in matters of religion? or settle him

under a despotic government as though he were the spoils of a spiteful war? No, certainly; but man must now be considered as some high ally invested with more power than ever. This would still be more evident if we should consider what Christ has done, and how they stand joint heirs with him in his purchase and kingdom. (Rom. 8: 1, 16, 17.)

II. The power placed in man that enables him to manage religious affairs is not sovereign, but limited and confined power. (1) All laws are enacted already, and (2) there is no coercive power needful in the church. The highest act in administering judicature is excluding a person out of the society. In the church there are no fees or fines, etc. In civil empire, to keep mankind in any good decorum, there is much hard work to be done, in peace and war; under mesne process, and in criminal causes. There is forming of armies, raising the *posse comitatus*, building of castles, etc.; cropping of ears, chopping off heads, and what not! — so that civil government has need of an immense power as well as treasure, and to be clothed with brass and iron. But as for the church of God, faith, prayers and tears are generally their best weapons against the hostility of foreigners; and in the government of their home-born, it may be done by soft words or hard words. (1 Thess. 5: 12. Heb. 3: 13–10: 24, 25.) So that the business does not require abundance of external force, or form of government. That it is a thousand pities to make such a great noise and bustle in the world about church power, as though the subjects of it were to furnish armies and navies to encounter half the potentates on earth in defence of the church.

When, alas! good men, as to all occasion for power, it is quite another thing, and the exercise of it generally falls within reach of an ordinary reason. That certainly whatever the right of the brotherhood is as to the original of power, there cannot be abundance of bad omens in allowing them some share in church judicatory.

III. Power — this word seems to be all thunder; but, however, it is very copious, and may be applied to God and his creatures. It is predicable of the latter, in their different classes and orders of being, and none so weak but have some share of it. But to confine the word to polity, etc. It is by some thus defined, namely:

Power or authority — is that whereby a man may claim, or challenge any thing to oneself, without the injury of another, upon a supposition, this is a true definition.

Query. Whether Christian people may not claim or challenge the following rights or prerogatives without doing injury to any, namely:

1. Whether, if they are pleased (a suitable number of them) to enter into a religious society, by punctual and voluntary compacts to support the worship of God in the world; whether this may not be done without injuring any? and then,

2. When so united, whether they may not choose their own officers.

3. Discipline their own members.

4. Represent themselves upon proper emergencies, by their delegates (all which are the principal pillars of a democracy); whether, I say, they cannot do all these without injury done to any others? But to

proceed a little further in opening the nature of power. If we unite *dunamis* and *exousia*, namely, strength of nature and authority of institution into one proposition, then political power may be thus defined, namely:

Power is an ability, furnished with a lawful right to act. Now, upon a presumption of the validity of this proposition, power may be easily apprehended as vested in every church, and in every member and officer of a church, according to the nature, degree, and duty of each subject of power, and may act and exert their several powers and authorities without any incongruity, or interfering one with another.

IV. That a gospel church essentially considered as a body incorporated, is the subject of all church power. Though a church thus considered cannot formally exercise all branches of power belonging to it, neither can the subject of sovereign power itself exert all acts of power till fitted with proper organs or a suitable ministry, and yet it cannot be denied but that all power really, and all acts of power virtually, must needs be in it. And so in a church.

Therefore as to church power in the exercise of it, it may be distributed into what belongs (1) to the combination of many, namely, the power of judgment and donation. Or, (2) to what belongs to one or more set off for that end, namely, the power of office. This distribution, Mr. Hooker pursues with great illustration. (Surv. p. 1, p. 187.) Here I shall confine myself to the consideration of the exercise of that power which belongs to the brotherhood in distinction to office power; which principle I shall pur-

sue by evincing the truths of the following proposition, namely:

That the Scripture does warrant a government in gospel churches, consisting of the exercise of several distinct powers inherent in the fraternity, in distinction to office trust. This may be evinced,

I. By the recitation of the several distinct powers themselves.

II. By the dignity which the Scriptures put upon the churches as free states, and subjects of power in distinction from their officers.

I. By the recitation of the several distinct powers, both preparatory to, and resulting from their combination.

1. There is a preparatory power in them both as rational and sanctified beings of forming themselves into churches. This affirmation seems to me as fully contained in the genuine sense of Scripture, as though written in some divine manifesto, in such terms as these, namely: Let this be proclaimed through all the earth, that I, the Lord Jesus Christ, have invested all holy and good Christian people, both by nature and grace, with power to enter into church order, for the advance of my name and their own edification. If we had such an article in Scripture written in terms, we should have made great use of it in justifying our constitution; for it plainly settles all power originally (under Christ) in the people. And then if such a power or faculty be in them when in separate parts, as to assemble and enter into solemn engagements, and thereby to enter into a church state, it necessarily follows that having

embodied, they may easily go forward and provide for their own well-being. He that hath read the gospel and observed how many churches are mentioned, without notice taken of the manner of their origination, must needs allow the observation to be a fair consequence from it; it being so agreeable with the light of nature.

2. The powers resulting from their combination may be more distinctly recited.

(1) Power. The election of officers. Officers are for the well-being, and completing of any state. There is no regular government that can well subsist without them; these are the hands, the eyes, and feet of government in administration. To separate qualified persons to the highest office trust in a state, is by civilians attributed to the creating power of sovereignty. So that it must needs be a great power belonging to the church under this head, and that it is the churches' prerogative I might reason, *ex jure superioritatis*. For that the church is superior to its officers, and not the officers to the church. For that churches are not made for officers, but officers for churches; therefore, says the apostle, 1 Cor. 3: 22, "All things are yours — whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." But I shall principally depend upon the example and practice of the apostolical church under this head. It is a celebrated saying of Cyprian in pressing Acts 1: 26, to confirm the power of the people in choosing and refusing their officers. *Plebs Christiana maxime potestatem habet, vel dignos sacerdotes eligendi, vel indignos recusandi.* The highest power of electing worthy officers and rejecting unworthy is in the people. 'For the whole church,

says Turretinus (*de Jure Vo.*), *duos eligit*, chooses two to undergo the lot for the apostleship, that they might supply the vacancy by the death of Judas, Acts 1: 23, 26. And, indeed, it is contrary to all civility and reason to imagine the apostles would be so trivial in their ministry, or prodigal of their own authority as to indulge the fraternity in such actions, namely, such as electing an extraordinary officer, if the election of officers did not belong to them. So in the choice of the deacons mentioned, Acts 6: 2, 3, 5, the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said — Brethren look you out seven men, whom we may appoint over this business. The saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, etc. It must needs be very surprising, if the apostles should thus dignify and intrust the brethren with a prerogative of electing these officers, if the power of election was not inherent in them, that unless any one can fairly make it out that the apostles were either in jest or did they know not what, in directing the brethren to do as they did in the recited examples, it must needs stand for a truth that the power of electing officers is in the fraternity of the church, by the judgment of Christ's apostles.

(2) Power judicatory. (Mat. 18: 15, 20.) This paragraph of Holy Writ lays open a scheme of juridical power in the subject of it, that is the church; and this is to be observed, that from the first commencement of the process to the final issue in the execution of the obstinate and criminal member, all is to be ascribed to the authority of the church; for what business has one man to interrupt another in his crimes and unlawful pleasures, unless he has power

so to do? And how comes one man to have power over another, unless conquest, hostility, or compacts have made them liable, as members of the same community or subjects of the same government? Therefore the offended person, proceeding regularly for detecting a delinquent, must needs be supposed to derive his power from the same fountain, namely, the sessions where the case is finally to issue by execution, and the subject of this power is the church. Tell the church.

But, moreover, let it be considered, that to speak by way of allusion, there be several removes of the action of trespass from one hearing to another, as though it go from an inferior to a superior sessions, and that Christ was here, in this precept, settling inferior and superior assizes in his kingdom. And indeed there cannot be a wiser scheme drawn up, that shall carry the aspect of more grace, love, humility, tender regard to honor, and also justice than this, both for the encouragement of religion, the awing of spectators, and keeping the church pure. But to proceed,

1. In making out process, the first trial is to be had at the assizes of a man's own intellectual powers, reason, conscience, etc. being assembled, are to sit in judgment, hear the pleas, and the indictment being read and justified must pass sentence, and at this bar the case may be fairly issued. If he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. So that most certainly the plaintiff has a right to enter his case at this sessions, and here we see it may be issued; then certainly this is a branch of the power of judicature, otherwise an aggrieved person might expect a very severe repulse from a sturdier offender, for interrupt-

ing a man's repose of mind in his own actions. What saucy clown is that? Who dare challenge my conscience with the cognizance of any crime? Boldface! Where is your commission? Who made thee a ruler? (Acts 7: 27.) In civil affairs particular men when injured, must not make bold to correct an ordinary trespass upon their persons or interests, but by forms of law; if they do, especially if by measures which are grievous, they may be indicted themselves for disturbers of the peace. That certainly this branch of the text refers to a legal bar and lawful power, so that the complaining party may commence his suit with boldness, produce his pleas and demand justice. But the critical question is, Who is judge of this court? Certainly it is some layman's powers, supposed to be very competent judges, as sufficiently skilled in the rules of court, and how to apply them. And why may not all the judges contained in the whole series of judicatory laid open in this text be of the same sort? For that the case is not so deep, but that the first judges and sessions it comes before are supposed by our wise Saviour and lawgiver, capable fully to understand and traverse it, and do judgment and justice upon it, and bring it to a final issue. But,

2. Upon a defeat the process goes forward by removing the suit by an appeal to a more impartial hearing. The next sessions therefore by review, is to consist of one or two of the brethren. (Take one or two more.) But possibly some may be ready to say, Ah! We are like to have very good justice before so wise a sessions! Well, it is what Christ has appointed, and let us keep his path and it will bring

us safe home; for that these persons are commissionated by Christ, as capable judges, and therefore are to exercise one branch of the power fixed in the church. But when the case is gone thus far through the law, and the adverse party will not submit to the last verdict that is brought in, the case must be removed again. For that,

It is allowed to have one trial more, and no more, and that is to be before the church. For if he hear not the church, he shall be as an heathen man, etc., that is to say, the church shall then issue out execution, which is the end of the law.

Object. But the great and stupendous objection which crosses our way, is, that the governing church is here meant; that is to say, the presbytery in their classes and several sessions, till you come to the last appeal.

Answ. 1. It is very unscriptural to force such an interpretation on the text; for if we consider the etymology and universal acceptation of the word church, the objection will be found very defective, both in its rhetoric and divinity; there being no harbor for it within the sense of Farnaby's tropes or figures. And as for its divinity, let the objection but cite one text more wherein church is mentioned and officers are intended, and we will resign. But without it to yield so great an interest upon so slender a claim is repugnant to justice and honor. But,

2. How can wise men manage their souls, or bring them into such a figure as to think that Christ should have such a far reach in his thoughts in such easy cases as are plainly contained in the text? The notions in the objections are plainly ridiculous to the

light of nature, in that civil measures adjust according to the degree and nature of suits and cases. A cause of twelve pence is triable by a single justice, and one appeal brings the suit to the end of the law. Indeed cases which are of greater weight and value, have a larger scope in the law allowed them, etc. And what! Is there the least shadow for a pretence that such cases as are within our text, namely, such as may be issued by one single brother making his suit to his brother's reason and conscience, etc., or by two at the most, and that at the sole charge of a few honest pleas from the heads of charity or piety? I say, are these cases so grand as to be transmitted from one class to another, till they arrive at the chief seat where the definitive sentence is to be given forth? There is apparently some great fallacy in the objection, or certainly our blessed Saviour did not state his cases right; for let us again consider, who must sign the bill of cost at last? Or who must bear all the charges of writings, witnesses, travels of horses and men; and for all expense of time and money, from the sessions first mentioned, and so from sessions to sessions, and from class to class, until all is brought to a final issue? When as possibly the original writ of process, or first action, might not contain in real civil damage, a farthing more than about a groat or sixpence. And what, can we think that our wise Saviour would adjust his settlements at no better a rate than this comes to? *Vah! proh dolor!* Men have plainly made a fool of mankind by corrupting this text, whereby they have set the discipline of the church at such a charge, that millions of millions have run out in waste to humor

their ambition; when as the wise and innocent churches of God in their single capacities would have done better justice, and have drained nothing more from you than some tears of contrition. For,

3. What is more natural than to imagine a church of believers, with their set of graces and common prudence (especially when under the influence of a regular ministry), should be held capable to execute this rule, according to the full sense of it; yea, though they bring the delinquent in the traverse of the case to the highest censure. Indeed, it must be acknowledged, that excommunication, major or minor, is an awful result of authority; yet not really in every respect and in all degrees quite so bitter as death itself. And yet death is very frequently dispensed to capital sinners, and that solely by the verdict of their peers, namely, twenty-four good and lawful men of the vicinage, are in forms of law a sufficient judicatory to take away a man's life, and the venerable bench of judges must not overrule, but stand and say amen, in that good justice is done in the world by such a small company of illiterate men, the law having assigned them to this service. To the foregoing precept let us join, Col. 4: 17. 1 Cor. 5: 12. Rev. 2: 2, 20. 1 Thes. 5: 41. Gal. 6: 1.

Now to conclude, let the reader lay all these Scriptures together, which contain rules of judicatory for the churches, and then let him answer me with good reason if he can, and tell me why these Scriptures may not be esteemed the churches' *magna charta* in matters of censure and judicature, as well as that be held such a golden rule in the judicial proceedings of English government, mentioned in the great charter

of English liberties, chap. 29. No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, or be disseised of his freehold, liberty, or free customs, or be outlawed or exiled, or any other ways destroyed, nor will we press upon him, nor condemn him, but by lawful judgment of his peers. Now gentlemen! Do not you think that the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of heaven, is as careful and tender of his subjects as the king of England is of his? And, indeed, why should not each set of subjects be equally and alike guarded from the hazard of oppression, or the arbitrary measures of each ministry? Unless those that belong to the gospel are formed out of a distinct clay from each other?

(3) Power. To represent themselves in synodical conventions, for the establishment of this power in the churches, see Acts 15: 2, 22, 23; and for a more ample display and conformation of this point, I refer the reader to the excellent treatise of Dr. Increase Mather, in his disquisition concerning ecclesiastical councils.

II. The dignity which the Scriptures put under the churches as free states, and subjects of power in distinction from their officers.

It is very plain that most of the epistles of St. Paul which make up a great part of the canon of Scripture, were directed to the body of the brotherhood, and peculiarly adapted for their use, with little or no notice at all taken of the ministry therein.

In sum, when he was just concluding his letter and winding up his discourse with his grace and respects to some choice Christian friends, he puts the officers in with them, and orders the brotherhood to

give his salutations to them as persons unconcerned with the contents of the epistle, Heb. 13: 24. In the last verse but one in the whole epistle, says the apostle, Salute all them that have the rule over. That whatever other meanings may be in such methods of divine writings, they must needs respect some high powers and trust vested in the churches. Those epistles sent to the angels of the churches of Asia; the principal share of those letters literally taken, which belonged to the officers, is but the superscription; the contents of the letters are immediately directed to the fraternity. Where there is any thing amiss the fraternity is reprehended; where there is any thing worthy of credit, they are commended. Or if there is any thing in point of order or discipline to be done, they are directed and commanded. All is to the churches. Therefore it is said again and again, He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, etc., Rev. 1: 7. Finally, Let any considerate man but read and well ponder the epistles to the Corinthian, Ephesian, etc. churches, and observe the characters of the brotherhood; with the precepts how they shall act personally and with authority one towards another, etc., he must then needs subject his mind to the force of this conclusion, namely, that Christ's gospel churches in their fraternities, are not such ciphers as they stand in some men's accounts; but are really and truly proper bodies full of powers and authorities, for the government of themselves and all their concerns, as all democracies are.

DEMONSTRATION IV.

From the excellent nature of the constitution, in that it exceeds all that have been yet extant in the Christian world. This I shall endeavor to illustrate by three pleas.

Plea I. In that it best suits the great and noble designs of the gospel, and that in a peculiar manner as it tends to the promoting holiness in the world; not only from the strict nature of the constitution in the admission of members, whence the churches become a more exact emblem of heaven, both for the illuminating and dreading of others, that beholding their goodness, may glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Pet. 2: 12.) But from the great advantage put into the hands of the best sort of men (solid, pious, wise, and unbiased men), of furnishing a country with persons eminently qualified for the ministry, and keeping them so. There is no lurking-place for Symony in this constitution. There is no buying and selling of offices, whereby the world has been miserably cheated and debauched. Here is no back stairs for cousins and favorites to climb up to high seats without desert; it is merit and intrinsic worth set the value, and hold the strongest plea for preferment here. Hence every village and corner of a town, where religious congregations are settled, are furnished with persons for the gospel ministry of such

learning, and bright saints, and of such real and distinguishing virtue and zeal, that they must needs be very prevalent in carrying on the main design, etc. But this plea is fully pursued by Dr. Owen, in his Enquiry, etc. (p. 120 and so on), whither I refer the reader that wants more satisfaction.

Plea II. For that it has the best balance belonging to it of any church-government in the world. Other governments have generally too high a top, and are very lopsided too; nay the best we can meet with without vanity or envy, it may be said, that not only seemingly like Grantham steeple, but really it stands awry, and being so overloaded on nature's corrupt side, with learning, power, and high trust, it plainly hangs over several degrees from a true perpendicular, towards Babylon. And if it falls it buries you; and then you must remember it has monopolized all power, so that you have none left to stir under your load, or creep out with. But here is a government so exactly poised, that it keeps its motions regular like the stupendous spheres, unless some Phæton chance to mount the chariot box, and becomes the driver. I have sufficiently, I think, evinced the power in the brotherhood; and though every church is a body consisting of very numerous parts and a noble ministry, yet the balance of power is very exactly and with great advantage preserved; both between the members of the body in general, and between themselves, and their public ministry in special.

1. Between the members of the body. For besides, the wisdom, love, and other ennobling principles, in some measure actuating every member. The venerable major vote, which guides and governs the august

states of parliaments; nay all assemblies, superior and inferior, that have any equality of power dispersed amongst the members, ordinarily keeps the whole body, in all points of administration, in an exact equipoise.

2. And as for the state of the ministry, there is no grain of allowance wanted on their side, to make their office power, if not an even balance arithmetically upon an accurate and distressing trial; yet in the series of a laudable ministration, it is an equivalent of power; at least according to the terms of our constitution. (Platf. c. 10, sect. 11.) But let the case be stated as accurately as may be, and let every fair principle which grants the power to be originally in the people, be yielded; and also establish a proper judicature in the brotherhood; yet it is apparent in all examples, that the ministry of this constitution are held, if not in proper speaking, yet in conscience and religious courtesy, as though all power were invested in them; or at least to such a degree that there is no appearance of what may render the government grievous to them, if they are but contented to be the masters of an assembly of free men, and not of slaves. Amongst abundance of illustrations I will mention two.

(1) The great veneration in man's mind towards those who are sensibly clothed with authority. If I am a father where is my honor, if a master where is my fear, Matt. 1 : 6. The prophet reasons from the law of nature; there being such a property planted in the soul by its Maker to revere superiors, and especially men in public trust. And also the authority shining in them, being such bright rays both of the

divine majesty and benignity, there being such a sensible good and benefit accruing thereby, to the rest of mankind, hence springs a universal disposition to obedience and submission, this is obvious through the whole civil ministry of the world; there is no need to make every judge in commission, or chief magistrate, a sovereign prince to gain homage to him. No, but as soon as a man appears vested with authority, there is that in the soul of another which teaches reverence and obedience to him in his trust, both from the suggestions of fear and sense of interest. So that a learned, painful, and pious ministry intrusted with the souls and happiness of men; and taking indefatigable care to secure eternal life for them, has a most charming and endearing aspect and influence upon all the rational powers. Insomuch that nature itself has a high value for such subjects of trust. And as for grace, it is ready to be lavish of its victims. . . . Ye . . . received me as an angel of God even as Christ Jesus. . . . If it had been possible ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me, Gal. 4: 14, 15. If any man doubts of the validity of this plea, let him but view what conquests have been made by the abuse of these principles, and you will find the ministry of the Christian world have far exceeded Cæsar in subduing mankind; for from an honest obedience they have brought them to lie down, and be trampled on by their spiritual owners. That there is no danger on the people's side when things are well stated, if there be but a wise and due management on the other. And still it is more evident,

(2) From the extent of commission, with the

many ennobling prerogatives fixed in their trust. Though they are the ministry, and but the ministry of a democracy, their commission is so large, and high prerogatives so numerous, they carry so great an appearance, as though in reality they were the subjects of all power. And I think it is so from the nature and modes of all regular government; for when a government has enacted their laws and precepts, and settled their ministry, they leave the sway of things to them; that it is as though they had resigned all the power to the ministry. So it is peculiarly in the affairs of gospel churches. That let men at their leisure view this illustration by the Scripture, our platform, and by the laws and customs of nations, and they will find it a truth. That certainly a painful ministry may easily be reconciled to our constitution, unless they are raised to that temper of mind as he was, who had this for his motto, *Aut Cæsar aut nihil*, — a Cæsar or nothing.

Plea III. From the near affinity our constitution holds with the civil governments of some of the most flourishing commonwealths in the world. It is certain every species of government, simple and mixed, have their various excellences and defects; much may be said in honor of each, and also every constitution may have something wanting; at least it may seem so, under a more critical survey of its nature, principles, ill-conveniences, corrupt ministry, misfortunes, etc. And many times a government falls under scandal from distemper of mind, from false ends and corrupt interests, which sway and overrule men's thoughts relating to government more than from the constitution itself. But, however, to evade all circu-

lar discourses, we may very fairly infer, where we find nations flourishing, and their liberty and property with the rest of the great immunities of man's nature nourished, secured, and best guarded from tyranny, we may venture to pronounce this people to be the subjects of a noble government, and there be many such on earth whose constitution will serve to justify ours. I shall instance in three, and no more.

1. The Venetian commonwealth; though some are pleased to call the government of this free state an aristocracy, but it seems more properly a limited democracy, for that the seat of sovereign power is their ancient commons, called their families, enrolled in the golden book; these make up the grand council of the nations, settle the public ministry, and enact laws, etc. This people have by this mode of government raised themselves into so august and flourishing a capacity, that from a very obscure original they are grown to that degree as to bridle and curb the pride and haughtiness of Turk and Pope. This example must needs be no small honor to our constitution. But,

2. The Belgic provinces are without interruption allowed to be the subjects of a formed democracy, they in some ages past being insulted and unmercifully trampled upon by that august tyrant, the Spanish monarch; they, being his subjects, broke loose from him and set up for themselves. They assumed to themselves their original power, and when they had got it into their hands, had the wit and kept it, and have improved it in the form of a democracy to this day, and God has blessed them; that from the poor states of Holland, they are now grown to wear

the splendid title of "their high mightinesses," and are a match for most monarchs on earth. Says Gordon of their government: "The seven provinces of Holland, being under a democratical government, are, as it were, several commonwealths, each province being a distinct state; yea, and every city having an independent power within itself to judge of all causes, whether civil or criminal, and to inflict even capital punishment; but all joining together, make one republic, the most considerable in the world."

Query. Whether such examples of popular governments now extant on earth, and yielding such vast advantages to the subjects, and being so regular and practicable,— I say, whether they may not justly deter all men from reproaching our constitution with the scandalous title of anarchy, unless they will allow us to prepare a chronicle for them, and therein publish to the world their profound ignorance of the several species of government, and the distinct way of placing and exercising various powers in them.

3. The English. This nation is reputed to be the subjects of the finest and most incomparable government in the world. And this original happy form of government is (says one) truly and properly called an Englishman's liberty: a privilege to be freed in person and estate from arbitrary violence and oppression, and a greater inheritance than we derive from our parents. And this birthright of Englishmen shines most conspicuously in two things.

(1) In parliaments, wherein the subject has, by his representatives, a share in legislative power, and so makes his own laws, and disposes of his own money.

(2) In juries, whereby he has a share in the executive part of law, so that no causes are tried, nor any man adjudged to lose his life, member, or estate, but upon the verdict of his peers, his equals or neighbors, and of his own condition. These two grand pillars of English liberty are the fundamental, vital privileges whereby we have been, and are still preserved more free and happy than any other people in the world, and we trust shall ever continue so; for whosoever shall design to impair, pervert, undermine either of these, do strike at the very constitution of our government, and ought to be prosecuted and punished with the utmost zeal and vigor; for to poison all the springs and rivers in the kingdom could not be a greater mischief; for this would only affect the present age, but the other would ruin and enslave all our posterity. I shall improve this example by three queries.

Query 1. Ah! What is the matter with Englishmen — men of such courage to be surprised with such fear, as though they were like to be taken captive, and turned into slaves in their own home? Why, in good truth, there may be a reason for it, therefore it becomes them to be very careful under this head; for if they make themselves slaves in their own country, or let others do it for them, when they can prevent it, they both deny God who made and redeemed them, and plainly violate the law of nature.

Query 2. Who is it Englishmen are thus afraid of? Who do they thus reflect upon in their frights and fears? It is neither France nor the great Turk which dreads them; therefore it must needs be some

body or another nearer home that threatens their liberty. And may not New England's gospel liberties deserve so much fear and caution, although it should so happen that somebody should be reflected upon by their cautiousness?

Query 3. If the settling such immunities as the privilege of parliaments and juries in the hands of the people be such effectual barriers to preserve a nation from tyranny and slavery, then whether, when gospel churches have the means in their own power, it be not their wisdom to keep up the like barrier, or something equivalent thereto, that they may preserve themselves safe from the arbitrary measures of their own ministry? — or thus, whether for Englishmen, when their liberties in church or state are fast locked up for them and their posterity by law and regular settlements, it be not their best way to beware how they repeal those laws, or weaken those settlements?

But at present I shall leave it to other men to run the parallel between our constitution, and the several governments I have mentioned, and infer what more they shall think proper, only leaving to myself the liberty to conclude, that the several examples of civil states which I have named, do serve abundantly to justify the noble nature of our constitution in church order; for that the several famous and august nations which I have mentioned, in all their glory at home and success in arms and trade abroad, their several governments which have brought them to all this are either a perfect democracy, or very much mixed and blended with it.

Then why should we in New England be any more ashamed, or less careful of our church govern-

ment, which keeps us from tyranny and slavery in the concerns of our consciences, than those nations are of their civil government, whereby they are preserved from the like damnable circumstances in the concerns of their outward life, and natural rights and fortunes?

DEMONSTRATION V.

From the dignity which the providence of God has put upon the constitution, both in the first ages of the Christian churches and in the last century.

I. In the *first ages of the Christian churches*, God has put many marks of distinguishing favor upon this constitution, both in the smiles and frowns of his providence.

1. In the smiles of Providence upon the churches, whilst they continued complete in their constitution. I shall offer but three particulars to justify this observation.

(1) In the great and admirable success of the Gospel in the conversion of so many nations.

(2) In their singular purity and virtuous deportment in the midst of a corrupt world. That (as Mr. Cotton observes) was a general eulogy belonging to their members, and ascribed to them by the wiser sort of heathen, namely, *Bonus vir, tantum Christianus* — he is a good man only who is a Christian.

(3) They were eminently supported and carried on by the grace and providence of God through all their direful sufferings; the more they were wasted and destroyed, the more they grew and increased, as Israel in Egypt. Indeed whilst they remained firm to their constitution, they were not only like an army

in banners, but in reality the greatest conquerors that ever appeared on earth. They merely baffled the bravery of the old Roman spirit, and were quite too hard for those who had vanquished the world. I have seen, says Eusebius, the executioner (tired with tormenting them) lie down panting and breathing, etc. But I never saw the martyrs weary of sufferings, nor heard them desire a truce: nay, were rather ambitious of the longest and most terrible sufferings, that they might be martyrs in every member. Thus the churches endured hardness as good soldiers of Christ through ten bloody persecutions, and at last retreated by divine providence under the umbrage of the great Constantine; and there the churches of God made the finest show that ever was seen on earth — next to Christ in his transfiguration. Till this time the churches remained the subjects of their democratical government in some good measure, though there were some symptoms of an alteration in the last century; but indeed after the churches were freed from the rage of heathen persecutors, there quickly followed the perfect subversion of their order.

So we come,

2. To consider the frowns of Providence that pursued the Christian world after the subversion of their primitive constitution. Sufficient observations have been made under the foregoing demonstrations, setting forth the change of government which was made in the churches; and, in short, it was really and properly the altering the ministry of a democracy into an aristocracy; for, to speak plainly, the public officers, to gratify their ambition, took all the power into their own hands, and settled all affairs and concerns

according to their own minds, without control. But let us eye the providence of God, and we may observe that God did soon stain the pride and glory of these men, especially in two eminent instances of his displeasure, which I shall only mention.

Instance 1. In the fatal Arian heresy, that spread itself like some mortal contagion through the Christian world, that it was said the whole world was become an Arian. Arius was the author of this damnable doctrine, namely, that our Saviour Christ was neither God nor eternal, but a creature; and that he assumed only the body, not the soul of man, etc. This damnable heresy soon spread itself far and wide; the author was in the height of his wickedness, and fell a victim to divine vengeance in the latter part of Constantine's reign; but his heresy continued and prevailed, and especially amongst the clergy. But this is very awful to observe, that when these men by their wit and cunning had once cozened and cheated the fraternity of their ancient rights and prerogatives, God left the devil to cheat and deceive them, as wise and learned as they were, of their true religion and souls together. What good did all their legerdemain do them now? Had not they better have kept holy and humble pastors, confined to their parochial diocesses, and known and loved and preached Christ, the eternal son of God, and him crucified, rather than stretched their boundary like sovereign princes, and so left to perish under such a dreadful dispensation as the fruit of their ambition and infidelity?

To me (considering the commencement, the deadly nature, the rage, the universal prevalence and con-

tinuance of this damnable heresy) it seems as though God had looked down from heaven and viewed the sacrilegious robbery committed upon the churches with detestation; and therefore summoned a congress of the several states of the other world. 1 Kings, 22: 10,—I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and issuing out proclamation.... Be it known, that never has a nobler cause been so baffled and sacrilegiously betrayed by the dignified trustees of it as this. I have been down amongst my golden candlesticks, my famous churches; I find the fraternity drowsy and remiss, setting too low a value on their inestimable rights; and those who should rouse them from their security and incogitancy, rather esteem it a lucky omen; and, therefore, to satiate their own ambition (instead of advising and directing the churches in the study of their constitution, and so plead their cause for them), they consult how to defraud them, they wrest the Scripture, darken all places which settle their titles, and, to end all disputes, threaten them Diotrephes like (3 John. 10), with the secular power that is now on their side. That they have at last absolutely supplanted them, stripped and taken away the rights belonging to the churches, and purchased at so dear a rate. That as though the Almighty should say, My patience is out! and my justice has prepared a cup of confusion for them; who, of all this convocation, will go and hand it to them? And there came forth several legions with an arch-devil at the head of them, and stood before the Lord and said, We will go and persuade them; and God said, You shall persuade them and prevail also; therefore go forth and do so, 1 Kings, 22: 22. As though God

should say, I have now in displeasure abandoned them to ruin; they who should have had a zealous regard to my settlements, and, as one chief end of their ministry, should have sought the happiness of the people, and not their own ease, vainglory, pride, and luxury; now leave them exposed to obliterate the essentials of their faith, and so fall a sacrifice to divine fury. Go, you malignant powers, do your worst; the hedges are now down.

Instance 2. The universal apostasy that has followed the subversion of the old constitution. We may in some degree date God's departure from his churches when they began to subvert the order of them, and so gradually withdrew, till he — at last left them to perish by whole ages together. It must not, indeed, be thought or said, but that God had a remnant through many ages, who continued orthodox in faith, both in the ministry and brotherhood. But yet it is very obvious that Christianity *gradatim* declined till all was swallowed up in a universal and direful apostasy, never sufficiently to be deplored, neither fully expressed unless we transcribe the volumes that contain it. I do account, indeed, that the destruction of the churches, in moral speaking, may be attributed immediately and nextly to other causes, as ignorance, pride, hypocrisy, etc., but remotely to the dissolution of the order of them. For that the constitution forenamed was adjusted by divine wisdom for preventing and remedying such maladies as proved the ruin of the churches; that when the remedy was quite taken away, bad humors predominate, and symptoms of a deadly aspect appear, and so death inevitably follows.

II. In the *last century* God has been very admirable in the works of providence, and has therein highly dignified our constitution. And we want no other evidence under this head than the recognition of what God has done for these famous English colonies in North America, who have all along distinguished themselves from all the world, by their singular regard both to the faith and practice of the true religion. Now let any other constitution on earth but parallel ours, in the eminent shines of providence and in religious effects, and we will resign the whole cause. But whilst, then, we will go on and rejoice in the grace of God, that we in these countries are, by his good providence over us, the subjects of the most ancient, rational, and noble constitution in church order that was, will be, or can be, whilst the laws of nature and grace remain unrepealed. For that it is a constitution which infinite wisdom hath authorized and founded in the law of nature, and his omniscient providence has eminently honored and dignified both by the smiles and frowns of his countenance, through all the ages of the Christian world to this very morning. And though some of the reverend churches within this grand consociation (who settled upon the same platform with us), have with too great a precipitation made a defection from the constitution, yet this is our comfort, that their alteration is not so firm as the laws of the Medes and Persians; for that those who turned them off, may by the same power bring them on to their old basis again. And let Christ pity and help them, for certainly their present state is portentous, from what may be observed from the proceedings of providence through the whole Christian era unto this day.

THE CONCLUSION.

I shall now conclude my whole essay by annexing the joint testimony of those eminent men, fathers in these churches, now in glory, namely, the Reverend Mr. John Higginson and the Reverend Mr. William Hubbard. And the rather because Mr. Hubbard did some time before his death, desire to have their testimony reprinted, and live with some other book which it might properly accompany. I am well satisfied the foregoing subject is the most proper companion their testimony could have lighted on, in its travels through this world; I therefore make bold to invite the said testimony to set out again with fresh courage, and improve its excellent language, together with former acceptance it found with the churches, to ingratiate and bespeak favor for this small treatise, its new ally and fellow traveller.

And let the holy churches (for whom these now appear in joint testimony to confirm their divine pedigree) flourish in their strength, beauty and order, after this triumvirate shall sink under the tyranny of moths and human forgetfulness, and lie down in the house of oblivion, where I hope the enemies of the constitution will be gotten down before them, and there fast buried in their own bones and dust.

But lest any should think it absurd, that I here produce such venerable authority in way of epilogue, which should rather in honor have been placed in the front of this attempt. To this I reply, that in honor and prudence I choose here to place these worthies. For you must note, I am now retreating out of the field of battle, and I hope upon honorable terms too;

and then the rear is the highest place in dignity; so that though they are bringers-up, it is no diminution to them. And not only so, but out of prudent conduct; for though I presume the enemy is fairly vanquished, yet some forlorn party may rally, and to gratify their desperate fortune may disturb us, but I hope these valiant and wise commanders thus posted will secure our rear, beat back the enemy, and bring all off with triumph.

A TESTIMONY

TO THE ORDER OF THE GOSPEL, IN THE CHURCHES OF NEW ENGLAND. LEFT IN THE HANDS OF THE CHURCHES, BY THE TWO MOST AGED MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL YET SURVIVING IN THE COUNTRY.

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1. ABOVE seventy years have passed away, since one of us, and above sixty, since the other of us came into New England, and having obtained help from God, we continue to this day.

We are, therefore, capable to make some comparison between the condition of the churches, when they were first erected in this country, and the condition into which they are now fallen, and more falling every day.

But we wish that in making this comparison, we had not cause to take the place, and the part of those old men, that saw the young men shouting aloud for joy at the new temple, Ezra 3: 12. Ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice.

2. We are under a daily expectation of our call to appear before our Lord Jesus Christ; and we have reason to be above all things concerned, that we may give up our account with joy unto him. That we may be the better able to do so, we judge it necessary for us to leave in the hands of the churches a brief testimony to the cause of God and his people in this land. And this the rather, because we are

sensible that there is risen and rising among us, a number who not only forsake the right ways of the Lord, wherein these holy churches have walked, but also labor to carry away as many others with them as they can.

We are also informed that many younger men of great worth, and hearty friends unto the church-state of the country, scarce know what interpretation to put upon it; but find it a sensible disadvantage unto them, that the elder men are so silent and remiss upon the manifest occasions that call aloud for us to open our mouth in the cause of churches that we should be loth to see led unto destruction.

3. We that saw the persons, who from four famous colonies assembled in the synod, that agreed on our Platform of Church Discipline, cannot forget their excellent character. They were men of great renown in the nation, from whence the Laudian persecution exiled them; their learning, their holiness, their gravity, struck all men that knew them with admiration. They were Timothies in their houses, Chrysostoms in their pulpits, Augustines in their disputations. The prayers, the studies, the humble inquiries with which they sought after the mind of God, were as likely to prosper as any men's upon earth. And the sufferings wherein they were confessors for the name and the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, add unto the arguments which would persuade us that our gracious Lord would reward and honor them with communicating much of his truth unto them. The famous Brightman had foretold, *Clariorem lucem adhuc solitudo dabit*, etc. God would yet reveal more of the true church-state unto some of his faith-

ful servants, whom he would send into a wilderness, that he might there have communion with them. And it was eminently accomplished in what was done for and by the men of God, that first erected churches for him in this American wilderness.

We do, therefore, in the first place, earnestly testify, that if any who are given to change, do rise up to unhinge the well-established churches in this land, it willbe the duty and interest of the churches to examine whether the men of this trespass are more prayerful, more watchful, more zealous, more patient, more heavenly, more universally conscientious, and harder students and better scholars, and more willing to be informed and advised than those great and good men, who left unto the churches what they now enjoy. If they be not so it will be wisdom for the children to forbear pulling down with their own hands, the houses of God, which were built by their wiser fathers, until they have better satisfaction.

It is not yet forgot by some surviving ear-witnesses of it, that when the synod had finished the Platform of Church Discipline, they did with an extraordinary elevation of soul and voice, then sing together the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation; God forbid, that in the loss of that holy discipline, there should be hereafter occasion to sing about breaking down the carved work of the houses of God, with axes and hammers, or take up the eightieth Psalm for our lamentations.

4. It was a joy unto us to see and read a book which the reverend president of our college lately published, under the title of " The order of the gospel,

professed and practised by the churches of Christ in New England." A book most highly needful and useful and seasonable, a most elaborate and well-composed work, and well suited unto those two worthy designs; first, the maintaining the congregational church-discipline; and secondly, the maintaining the sweet spirit of charity and communion towards reforming Presbyterians, who are our united brethren. But we must here withal testify, that in that worthy book there is nothing obtruded upon the churches, but what they who were here, capable of observing what was done sixty years ago, do know to have been professed and practised in the churches of New England (except in one or two); then, and ever since, until of late, some who were not then born, have suggested otherwise. Yea, it is well known, that the churches then publicly maintained those principles in several judicious discourses, which were never confuted by any men whatever, unto this present time. And we do, therefore, most heartily commend that book of the order of the gospel, unto the perusal and acceptance of the churches of the Lord.

5. It was one of the songs (as the Jewish masters tell us) in the feast of tabernacles, Blessed be our youth which have not made our old men ashamed. But alas! we that are old men must confess ourselves ashamed, when we see after what manner some of our youths have expressed and behaved themselves, and with what scoffs they have assaulted the order of the gospel, in some things lately published and scattered about the country; which have been so far from answering the arguments brought

for our church order, that they have been by the wonderful providence of Christ, made useful to establish the minds of serious Christians, in those very points which they see so weakly and so rudely opposed. We have taught our children in the catechism, called Milk for Babes, that there is to be a covenant of God in the churches, wherein they give up themselves, first unto the Lord to be his people, and then to the elders and brethren of the churches to set forward the worship of God, and mutual edification. And it cannot but be grievous unto us, as well as unto all serious Christians, for my children of New England, scornfully to vomit up their milk with scoffs upon that and other sacred actions in our churches, too horrible to be repeated.

If they take away from us one of the songs among the Jews, they would however leave us room for one of the sighs uttered by a rabbi among them; the worst fruit which we eat in our youth, excelled the best which we now eat in our old age, for in our days the world is changed.

6. Concerning all sinful attempts to overturn the order of the gospel, hitherto upheld in the churches of New England, and to spoil the glorious work of God, which we have seen him doing, with a series of remarkable providences, in erecting such Congregational churches in these ends of the earth; we would now, therefore, bear our testimony, that they are doubtless displeasing to our Lord Jesus Christ, who walks in the midst of these golden candlesticks, and they will prove bitterness in the latter end.

And this we declare with the more concern upon

our minds, because of an observation so plain, that he that runs may read it.

It is too observable that the power of godliness is exceedingly decaying and expiring in the country, and one great point in the decay of the power of godliness, is men's growing weary of the congregational church discipline, which is evidently calculated to maintain it.

If that church discipline were more thoroughly and vigorously kept alive, even by those that make profession of it, it might be hoped, that the Lord would sanctify it for the revival of all godliness in the land.

But if this church discipline come to be given up, we think it our duty to leave this warning with the churches, that probably the apostasy will not stop there; for the same spirit that will dispose the next generation to change their way in one point, will dispose them to more, and more changes (even in doctrine and worship as well as in manners) until it may be feared the candlestick will quickly be removed out of its place.

7. We do therefore humbly propose it, unto all the churches as a great expedient, for the preservation of our church-state, that more prayer (even in whole days of prayer set apart for that end) with other appointed means, may be used in the churches to obtain from the Lord, the outpourings of the spirit of grace on the rising generation. If so rich a blessing were obtained (and our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit unto them that ask it), and if the rising generation might be a praying, pious, devout and regenerate generation, there will not be such danger

as now there is, of their easily giving away the precious legacy which their fathers (now beholding the face of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory), left unto them, or of their doting upon innovations fatal to the order of the gospel among us.

8. Now as aged Joseph said, I die, and God will surely visit you; even so, we the unworthy servants of the Lord, whose age bids us every day to look for death, and our call to that world, where to be is by far the best of all, do conclude with our prayers unto the Lord for these holy churches, that he would surely visit them, and grant much of his gracious presence and spirit in the midst of them; and raise up from time to time, those who may be happy instruments of bringing down the hearts of the parents unto the children. The Lord bless these his churches, and keep them steadfast, both in the faith and in the order of the gospel, and be with them, as he was with their fathers, and never leave them nor forsake them.

JOHN HIGGINSON,
WILLIAM HUBBARD.

THE

CHURCHES' QUARREL ESPOUSED:

OR,

A REPLY IN SATIRE,

TO CERTAIN

PROPOSALS MADE, IN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION,

WHAT FURTHER STEPS ARE TO BE TAKEN, THAT THE COUNCILS MAY HAVE DUE CONSTITUTION AND EFFICACY IN SUPPORTING, PRESERVING, AND WELL-ORDERING THE INTEREST OF THE CHURCHES IN THE COUNTRY?

By JOHN WISE,

PASTOR TO A CHURCH IN IPSWICH.

Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. — Tit. 1: 13.

ABJICIENDUS PUDOR, QUOTIES URGET NECESSITAS.

Glocester, March 25, 1715.

Reverend Sir, —

We have had the favor and satisfaction of reading, and according to our measure considering the transcendent logic, as well as grammar and rhetoric, of your reply to the proposals; by which our eyes are opened to see much more than ever before we saw, of the value and glory of our invaded privileges, and are of opinion, that if your consent may be obtained to a new edition, it may be of wonderful service to our churches, if God shall please to go forth with it. However, it will be a testimony that all our watchmen were not asleep, nor the camp of Christ surprised and taken, before they had warning.

We are, reverend Sir,

Full of dutiful respect and gratitude,

Your sons and servants,

Samuel Moodey,

John White.

QUESTION AND PROPOSALS.

Question. What further steps are to be taken, that the councils may have due constitution and efficacy in supporting, preserving, and well ordering the interest of the churches in the country?

First Part. It was proposed,

1. That the ministers of the country form themselves into associations, that may meet at proper times to consider such things as may properly lie before them, relating to their own faithfulness towards each other and the common interest of the churches; and that each of those associations have a moderator for a certain time, who shall continue till another be chosen, who may call them together upon emergencies.

In these associations,

2. That questions and cases of importance, either provided by themselves or by others, presented unto them, should be upon due deliberation answered.

3. That advice be taken by the associated pastors from time to time, before they proceed to any action in their particular churches which would be likely to produce any embroilments. That the associated pastors do carefully and lovingly treat each other with that watchfulness which may be of universal advan-

tage; and that if any minister be accused to the association whereto he belongs of scandal or heresy, the matter shall be there examined, and if the associated ministers find just accusation for it, they shall direct to the calling of the council, by whom such an offender is to be proceeded against.

4. That the candidates of the ministry undergo a due trial, by some one or other of the associations, concerning their qualifications for the evangelical ministry; and that no particular pastor or congregation employ any one in occasional preaching who has not been recommended by a testimonial under the hands of some association.

5. That they should together be consulted by bereaved churches, to recommend to them such persons as may be fit to be employed amongst them for present supply, from whom they may in due time proceed to choose a pastor.

6. That hereunto may be referred the direction of proceeding in any of their particular churches, about the convening of councils that shall be thought necessary for the welfare of the churches.

7. That the several associations in the country maintain a due correspondence with one another, that so the state of religion may be the better known and secured in all the churches, and particularly it is thought necessary to the well-being of these churches, that all the associations of the country meet together by their respective delegates once in a year.

8. And finally, That ministers disposed to associate endeavor, in the most efficacious manner they can, to prevail with such ministers as unreasonably

neglect such meetings with their brethren in their proper associations, that they would not expose themselves to the inconveniences that such neglects cannot but be attended withal.

Second Part. It was proposed,

1. That these associated pastors, with a proper number of delegates from their several churches, be formed into a standing or stated council, which shall consult, advise, and determine all affairs that shall be proper matter for the consideration of an ecclesiastical council within their respective limits, except the cases are such as the associated pastors judge more convenient to fall under the cognizance of some other council.

2. That to this end these associated pastors, with their respective churches, shall consociate and combine according to what has been by the synods of these churches recommended, that they act as consociated churches in all holy watchfulness and helpfulness towards each other; and that each church choose and depute one or more to attend their pastor, as members of the council in their stated sessions, or occasionally, as emergencies shall call for.

3. That these messengers from the several consociated churches shall be chosen once a year at the least.

4. It is propounded, as that which from our beginning has been recommended, that the churches thus consociated for these purposes have a stated time to meet in their council, and once in a year seems little enough, that they may inquire into the condition of the churches, and advise such things as may be for

the advantage of our holy religion. But the more particular time is best left to the determination of each respective association.

5. That the associations shall direct when there is occasion for this council to convene, on any emergency, and shall direct whether the whole or only a certain number of these consociated pastors and churches shall convene on such occasions.

6. It appears agreeable to the present condition of our churches, and from our beginnings acknowledged, that no act of the councils is to be reckoned as concluded and decisive, for which there has not been the concurrence of the major part of the pastors therein concerned.

7. The determinations of the councils thus provided, for the necessities of the churches are to be looked upon as final and decisive, except aggrieved churches and pastors have weighty reasons to the contrary, in which cases there should be provision for a further hearing; and it seems proper that the council convened on this occasion should consist of such pastors as may be more for number than the former, and they should be such, as shall be directed to, and convened for this purpose by the ministers of an association, near to that whereto those of the former council belonged, unto which the aggrieved should accordingly apply themselves, and in this way expect a final issue?

8. If a particular church will not be reclaimed by council from such gross disorders as plainly hurt the common interest of Christianity, and are not mere tolerable differences in opinion, but are plain sins against the command and kingdom of our Lord Jesus

Christ, the council is to declare that church no longer fit for communion with the churches of the faithful; and the churches represented in the council are to approve, confirm, and ratify the sentence, and withdraw from the communion of the church that would not be healed. Nevertheless, if any members of the disorderly church do not justify their disorders, but suitably testify against them, these are still to be received to the wonted communion by the churches; and if, after due waiting, the church be not recovered, they may (upon advice) be actually taken in as members of some other church in the vicinity.

These proposals were assented to by the delegates of the association, met according to former agreement, at B———, September 13th, 1705. To be commended to the several associated ministers in the several parts of the country, to be duly considered, that so what may be judged for the service of our great Lord, and his holy churches, may be further proceeded in.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO THE FRATERNITY OF THE CHURCHES IN THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIES.

TRULY HONORABLE AND BELOVED IN CHRIST: —

It is not from any disrespect, or for want of honor to the reverend eldership and pastors of your several communities, that I apply myself more immediately and thus abruptly to yourselves in this dedication. But for that it seems most agreeable with my present province. The privileges of the fraternity being so peculiarly the theme and subject of my pains, I esteem it very proper to introduce my following essays, with a few words of advice more directly to yourselves, if you may be thence moved and encouraged to assist for support of Christ's and your own interests. I desire to be without offence to any, and pray that all such worthy persons, wise and faithful pastors in these churches (who are as much obliged by their office to stand by and defend the established interest and rights of them as I am, and far more capable) will interpret my whole action in the most favorable sense. And though I have not with the noble Cortius leaped into a chasm made in the forum, yet I have ventured to step into the gap to keep the breach, till better hands come up for the

service of my country, and in defence of their sacred liberties; so that I hope many of you will come in with a new supply and recruit of courage and argument, when and where mine fails. And for the present I presume none of you will be offended, though I do thus immediately address the churches over which you preside, with the following principles of their interest and duty wrapped up in each other.

Then, honorable brethen!

1st. In general my advice is to you, that in good order and with all gracefulness which becomes wise men, you will with zeal, courage, and faithfulness, stand in the defence of, and maintain your church liberties. God certainly obliges you to do it, with all the discretion and bravery of spirit which becomes free men, in withstanding vassalage or a servile state, Gal. 5: 1, 13. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberties wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. The plea is as forcible against a Christian as a Jewish thraldom. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty. I must acknowledge I have not particular prejudice against any of the governments of Christian Protestant churches in the world, so as to defraud or dispossess any of them of heaven, or monopolize so great a royalty to our own; but yet I am of this opinion, considering the just title of the crown, the churches, the people, the capacity of soil and climate together, that the constitution and way of New England churches cannot be mended by exchange.

Briefly, to instance in the civil part, or interest of the crown, I think it very easy to evince, by the precepts both of religion and policy, that the parliament

(that wise and august council of the nation) could not have invented an establishment in church order, more for the service of the imperial crown of the British empire than our present constitution, especially in such a country and climate as this is.

I shall not now any wise enter upon the question, but only give just a short hint as to the revenue. Our present constitution does indeed, somewhat more than sip, it takes an honest healthful draught at nature's fountains, but leaves the flowing streams for empire to sit at, till filled with satiety.

The ecclesiastics in some kingdoms in Europe are ready not only to chide with crowned heads, but to take them by the throat and wring out of their hands, if not almost a moiety, yet a vast share of the golden fleeces that should supply the public treasuries, and clothe the nakedness of the kingdoms, and the people have no more wit but to justify and defend them in their claims and oppressions, and that till they themselves (in great numbers) are as thin and ragged as penury itself; for by their rules of adjustment, when the church hath gotten an unconscionable share, then the crown or subject must be almost starved; for there is not left a sufficient and plentiful supply for both.

But now our New England constitution is very fair-mannered, for when it sits down to the stalled ox (made ready) it carves temperately, and (without much defacing) leaves the whole to the empire to make its armies and navies, with the rest of its needful and unwearied servants welcome, that in loyalty to your prince and for the support of the royal revenue, you may justly preserve your freedoms.

Let us also consider the best good of the whole people.

It is most certain true grace is the one thing needful, and the main concern for the improvement of the powers both of prince, noble, and peasant. And though grace be of that nature that it will grow (after a fashion and in some sort of soil) almost under any government; yet it is most agreeable with laws of piety and wisdom (for the good of all in general), to choose and secure that constitution and form of government that is most agreeable, and which most naturally breeds it, and in greatest plenty.

By the suffrage of our nation, that government which sensibly clogs tyranny, and preserves the subject free from slavery, under the ambition of men of great fortune and trust, is the only government in the state to advance men's temporal happiness; and we in this country honor the resolve in civil affairs, and also affirm (upon great experience) that such a constitution in church government is (also) the only way to advance grace and man's eternal happiness; and we are the more ratified in our opinion, for that the experiment has on the other hand been tried with a witness, in almost all kingdoms of the Christian world, and that first, by disseizing (dispossessing) the fraternity of all interest in church government, only they have had the liberty to be governed with a hook in their nose (like wild cattle in a string), by the mercy and pleasure of their drivers; but as for any share in the exercise of government, they have had no more than the horses in the royal stables, for that their spiritual owners having seized all the keys of church power, they profess no dividend shall be

made, and also they themselves being uncontrollable by any, and unaccountable to any, unless it be to Christ himself, as they pretend; though I believe thousands of them never expect to meet with him, nor think that he ever will audit any accounts of theirs.

But, however, for the comfort and glory of the present life, the whole government of the spiritual kingdom, in all its branches and with its immense profits, has been established theirs. But this sort of discipline hath sunk great part of the Christian world as many times over as ages have passed, since it hath been installed universal rector, and where it hath kept absolute possession of the throne.

And must the waves and present currents sit and waft these churches towards those rocks and shipwrecks, whilst we have such good hands and pilots on board? God forbid!

Therefore let these churches and the noble fraternity of them stand their ground, keep fast hold of what you have got. Rev. 3: 11; Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Hold your hold, brethren! *Et validis incumbite remis*, pull up well upon your oars, you have a rich cargo, and I hope we shall escape shipwreck; for according to the latest observation, if we are not within sight, yet we are not far from harbor; and though the noise of great breakers which we hear imports hazard, yet I hope daylight and good piloting will secure all.

More particularly I ask your patience with liberty (still for your service) to make the few following distinct petitions.

PETITION I.

Honorable Brethren: — That you would know what you are, and who you are, in the more ample and heroic sense of your state!

It is certainly very agreeable with grace, for the upright, sometimes to shift ideas, and change such as are mournful for those which bear a bright aspect in their condition; otherwise they may rob God of the glory of the best part of his grace and bounty, and disable their own strength for some of the most important services they are called to in the world; therefore Nehemiah plucks up his courage and says, Should such a man as I flee? As though he should say, he knew himself owner of too many great endowments and instruments to be so little as to run for it, or be dreaded with such an alarm, Neh. 6: 11, 12.

So brethren imagine yourselves to be something more than ordinary; for really you are so; and that as you are a gospel combination, and collectively considered.

What! the best men of our country who form our courts, and command our armies, that make the figure and cast the true lustre (by their great wisdom and real accomplishments) in all great shows and appearances. Must all these be made null, or buried in a miosis (as is frequently enacted by ambition) for the sake of some inferior members in a fraternity? which is as much as to say, in state affairs, because cobbler's stalls or orange seller's baskets, afford no

statesmen, ergo, none to be found; or because that in many great counties there may chance to be an hundred knaves and twice the number of fools, ergo, there be no *legales homines*, lawful men fit for juries; no men fit for burgesses or knights of the shire, to be found to make parliament men? and so the kingdom must needs loose all its ancient rights by default. And whether or no such observations as these, that are so very conclusive, as you see, may stand for better law and logic in the churches than in the empire?

But if of equal force in each constitution, then, whether this is not the way to inter and bury the glory of the empire and churches in their own rubbish, whilst we incapacitate the heroes of both by an argument *a minoriad majus*, namely, by inferring the insufficiency of the great and wise, because of the mean and base mingled in the same communities.

PETITION II.

That you will put such an estimation and value on your church liberties, as the English do on their civil. And this is but a very reasonable request, if you consider the differing treasures under custody, namely, immortal souls on the one hand, and outward fortunes on the other.

Many of you know the stories (possibly better than I can recite them) which tell us what ship-loads of blood and treasure those civil things that cost the English world; and how near they still lie to Eng-

lishmen's hearts. And many of you being immediate successors, cannot but be very sensible what these New England liberties have cost your progenitors, some of them having buried their estates, and all of them their bones in these foundations, and left you now in possession, that if you should put contempt upon their adventures, their courage, wisdom, zeal, and self-denial, by underprizing these inestimable enfranchisements, and slight them as though they were now to be indorsed by your own hands with Hezekiah's Nehushtan, God may then put you to learn the worth of them at that school where they learnt it, and I am sure you will pay dear for your tutoring if it comes to that.

PETITION III.

Honor and oblige your pastors and public ministry.

It is certain they are very great articles in the reasons of your well-being. (Matt. 5: 13, 14.) They make all things more savory, and to go down with a better relish; yea, they alter tragedies and comedies into a more grateful entertainment. What is all the glory in the world without the gospel purely dispensed, and its most refined influence? These are the lights of the world, and carry the lantern aloft in the dark night of your travels, through the tempestuous ocean of a miserable life, to direct all to a safe landing at last.

Indeed, I must acknowledge, your ministers, when sound and faithful, are to be accounted and esteemed

amongst the best of your friends, though when corrupt and prejudiced, the worst of your enemies.

I think the devil himself and the world of his accomplices cannot do you the damage they may upon a revolt. That I beg you will be curious and careful of your interest embarked and deposited there.

And without making any scruple (in the main) they are your hearty and faithful servants. Endeavor to increase their love, and let them see and feel you have a double honor for them for their works' sake. And if after all your repeated grace and goodness, they will desert and betray you, they shall then incur a double guilt both by transgressing the laws of gratitude to you and of loyalty to their great Lord.

And I assure you, sirs, I should upon such terms be very loath to share in their triumphs, though their gains should be seemingly great, and their signals and shouts equal with the Cæsars of the world in their going off.

PETITION IV.

Furnish your churches with ruling elders.*

The nature of the office is not only agreeable with your frame, and exacted by your principles, but in-

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* The office of ruling elder obtained in some of the early churches of New England, but has long since become obsolete. Dr. Bentley says "The office of elder never existed in Salem but in name, and did not survive the first generation." Dr. Ware says, "Ruling elders were obsolete in 1735 in the Old North Church." Dr. Stiles says, "Neither lay nor teaching elders ever obtained in

deed carries safety and protection in it to your liberties; such trustees are not liable to corruption as other officers, in that you do (as it were) transmit and intrust them with your very principles of self-preservation, which are of that nature as never to alter their sentiments, unless it be in the dissolution of the subject, when it falls together. The office seems a creation, where your just and regular sympathies and antipathies centre by the laws of nature; that what you love, they love; what you hate, they hate; and being *ex officio*, of the standing watch and guard, they will peculiarly personate yourselves upon every notable crisis, and naturally caring for your affairs, will, like wakeful sentinels, curiously and with courage guard your liberties.

Let churches which are numerous and fuller of eminent gifts, lead the way, and then excite and provoke their sister churches to such love and good works for the advance of the common cause. There are without doubt, in these churches, many private members, worthy persons, suitably qualified for this office, who (like some edge-tools heedlessly left to rust out in oblivion) lie hid, yet, when found, and put to use, will prove themselves truly eminent.

Let Christ's churches seek amongst their neglected hoards; for they are without doubt, church by church,

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many of the churches of the first New England generation." Neal affirms that they were obsolete in his day. The titles, bishop, elder, and presbyter, pastors and overseers, are used in Scripture as synonymous or convertible terms. The pastoral office comprehends the whole ministry.—See Punchard's View, pp. 78–84, 109–112; Congregational Dictionary on the word elders, pp. 158–168.

far richer than they make for; there are, indeed, complaints of great poverty, and of a dearth and scarcity of suitable men. But I presume it is done with great injustice; and complaints of this nature in these churches, are but the complaints of servants that are full fed; and relieve no case by complaining, but rather reflect dishonor upon their good master, who hath bought all and bestowed enough and also incur blame to themselves for not improving those talents for the advance of his exchequer, which they themselves have wrapt up in a napkin, and that in this case, by too much symbolizing with the carnal and politic men of the world, who to humor some by ends (under the masquerade of indigent persons) make themselves very poor, though God has given them great riches. (Prov. 13: 7.) This is a true (though a serious affirmation) that in our constitution and principles, there is as plain a precept, if not as great a reason for this officer, as for any other in our churches; and yet, as to the matter of fact, we find it to be *rara avis in terra*, like a black swan in the meadow; and though the whole species is not quite rooted out, yet it is grown very rare to find one individual.

Now the fault must be somewhere, and I am satisfied our poverty is least to blame.

That somebody or another must needs be culpable, on the account of this great omission, may I without offence issue out, search, and inquest, to know who is to blame upon this failure, whether brethren, or public officers, or whole churches?

1. Private Brethren.

May not the blame be laid in some cases, and in some churches, upon some very capable Christian gentlemen, who, though not encumbered (for the public) with any other incoherent service, yet are possibly too shy of this trust, when offered to them? It must needs be acknowledged, the office is almost perfectly a piece of mortification and self-denial; there is no provision in it to feed ambition, or feast any other lust; all is full of watching and painfulness, and the reward and wages quite out of sight. But, however, in such examples, whether persons so qualified and so called ought not to comply, or themselves bear the blame.

The terms of Christ's kingdom are very strict and rigorous for the honor of his own crown, when our just titles are competitors, and he lays the conditions of our obedience upon a great forfeiture if we do not submit when called to duty, Matt. 10: 37, 39.

2. Public Officers.

May not the ordained officers in some cases and in some churches be taxed or blamed for this great omission? Such as out of timidity and distrust, jealous ruling elders, least they should, instead of colleagues, prove corrivals in the exercise of their own trust and authority, for being men not of such deep learning, yet may prove so fortified with friends and so popular, as that they may be capable to overtop men of greater learning and wiser principles of conduct in all administrations.

Now if any of Christ's churches are vacated of this officer by such jealousies as these, or of the like nature, can the officers be without blame? and if so, then whether the first-born son may not justly imprecate future barrenness on his own mother's womb, for fear lest he should be supplanted of the inheritance by the next son or brother born of the same mother?

Secondly. Such officers as may plead their own particular conscience and persuasion against the office, as being of a doubtful original, or of an uncertain institution, and therefore make bold to overrule our plain precept for it, and the church submits: whether is there not a great blame here?

It seems apparent by all rules of order and government, that this is too sovereign in the one, and too servile and careless in the other.

For that no officer's particular conscience must be a rule to govern any particular church contrary to the church's own law or rule of establishment; for if it be, then the churches must have as many distinct charters and differing books of canons, as their pastors have differing consciences — which is a plain inlet to all sorts of confusion.

Thirdly. Such officers who plead the custom of the churches, and so make the illegal omissions of some a sanctuary for the same fault in others; but whether this plea from custom will hold officers exempt from blame, when weighed in a just balance? Custom is justly allowed a great conqueror in the world; it subdues whole kingdoms to its empire, and all men submit and adhere to its demands and dictates as to an oracle. But then it must be custom

that is honorable, laudable, and uninterrupted, otherwise a custom which continually crosses a plain precept is very culpable, and contracts a long series of guilt, and may expect to be pursued with a tedious train of sad consequences, although it should with much presumption wipe its mouth and say, I am innocent. Therefore custom is no plea in this case, but rather renders all who depend upon it to be reduced to a desperate posture in their thoughts and arguments; for though there is a customary omission that has prevailed in the churches to a sad degree as to this office, yet the omission has all along crossed a precept, and has been confronted by the custom of other churches in the land, who have attended their duty; so that those churches who have maintained the practice have kept lawful possession of the right, and the title being matter of record and founded in law, there remains no shelter here from custom for delinquents.

Fourthly. Whether those officers are justifiable who honor the office, yet do honestly and uprightly think that the narrow extent of territory may (as to many churches) serve as a supersedeas (suspension) to the office? For what need of so many great commissions in so small bodies? But whether small churches have not great work belonging to them, sufficient to improve a full and complete set of officers, and possibly all little enough to do the work well, if the nature and extent of it be rightly considered and faithfully managed; for who is sufficient for these things?

3. The Churches.

Whether the churches, as incorporate bodies, are free from blame when they do not regularly endeavor to complete themselves in all offices, and prosecute their claim to this with effect?

The ruling elders are the church's privilege, and a very great right, on which their well-being and stability does much depend, and the great omission in the country has probably brought things to that posture of fickleness as we now find them at. Then whether the churches can be exempt from blame when they suffer such vacancies to continue, when it is in the power of their hands to remedy it?

Here indeed is a great question commencing, namely:

Question. Whether any church can possibly, and according to rules of order, proceed to elect ruling elders, when other of their officers in actual rule and trust shall refuse to call and guide the church in the choice?

I shall indeed transgress the bounds of my own intentions, and the civility of an epistle, if I should now undertake a full and complete answer to this question.

I shall therefore at present only just indicate the principal titles or heads for answer, by pointing briefly at the duties of officers, and the prerogatives of the churches in the case.

1. It is most apparent through the whole ministry of the world (unless in absolute monarchies), that it is the duty of all public officers to minister according to the plain rules of the public state, and not by their

own fancy or wills, and so in this case, the chief ruling officer or officers (then in being) in point of conduct are obliged to lead the church in their operation according to the church's plain and settled principles, and not reluct because their own persuasions do otherwise incline them. It is now plainly too late for any officer to pretend conscience against established rules. This objection should have been made before they had taken office; but now it is out of season, for they were elected and ordained to govern the church, not by their own thoughts as the rule, but by the church's canon, and that by their own consent, when they took office. And, moreover, this is most evident, that if such powers as belong to the inside of men's being, namely, their hearts, fancies, notions, judgments, imaginations, or consciences, call them by what names you please, or let the owners freely fix the titles (the odds is not great), now if these are to be the rule of churches, then pastors and ruling officers have (in their degree) as absolute a dominion over the churches, as the great Turk has over his bashaws and other vassals.

But I hope none here will claim this dominion. And if not, then let pastors and teachers do their duty in point of conduct (if the churches are not remiss in theirs), and this great vacancy may be soon supplied, and there is also a relief for officers, if their just prerogatives are anyways touched by the traverse.

2. To confine the discourse to this present example, and to shorten terms, for brevity's sake, it must be granted that any particular officer, sensible of his duty, that shall undertake to gratify and lead the

church, in the election and choice, etc. This makes the case very easy in point of conduct; yea, though other officers in the same church, if there be any, should either oppose or not act. For that any one ruling officer in a church, where there may be many of the same nature, he himself is virtually the whole college of officers in any office act that he performs without them. As in civil affairs, a particular executor so far sustains the whole executorship, as that he can make a valid act in that ministry, though many others are joined with him in the same testament, and yet do not nor will not act with him in this or that affair, though confirmed in their trust; which principle is founded in the nature of a joint tenancy in general, and in a joint trust in particular, held by many equals.

3. The case is very difficult when the standing officers join as one man, and will not guide the church in these elections referred to, etc. And I must needs say, I fear here has been the great bar to this office.

We may, from interest as well as duty, rationally suppose the inclinations of the churches, and the desires of many of them have been made known by repeated and honorable solicitations therein, saying to Archipus, Fulfil thy ministry (Cor. 4: 17), and we may also affirm, the principle is plain, the office is acknowledged at home and abroad to be of divine original. But however this is certain, it is a formal establishment by these churches, and not now to be disputed. Yet the officers pretend they see no reason to give way to the churches' desire or demands, neither will they conduct in this case, though their

duty does oblige, that so the church may be completed in its officers; no! they are pleased, by acts of a superintending power, to lock the church door and turn the key against this office, and no pleas or persuasions can alter their resolutions. But hereby the officers do plainly abdicate their office, by changing the acts of a limited trust, bounded by precept, into what is merely arbitrary; so in a degree they break up the relation between themselves and the church, and by such an essential error, so contrary to the church's charter and their own commission, they forfeit all at once, though lenity and mercy may favor them with a long life; yet in the eye of justice they are dead men, if not in nature, yet in law, and upon their obstinacy may justly be degraded; therefore, in such a case, when it comes to the extremity, the churches may and ought to call in council, and proceed in their work and duty for their own well-being, after the manner of an inorganic church platform, chap. 10. And this I need not stand to describe, our platform, the laws of the province, and the practice of the churches in other cases and vacancies, will do it.

Then whether these congregational churches through these provinces may not justly reflect blame upon themselves, for too supinely negligent a frame of spirit towards so great an interest and so noble an office, seeing they have such a share in government, and can fairly rescue themselves and their own rights by the power and principles of their own essence, when their other officers neglect duty?

PETITION V.

That you will please to revise the study, and in order to it, a new impression of your platform.

It is very usual for many gentlemen in your country, landed men and men of estates, every man to keep his law book by him, as his Bible — the Bible for the solace of his mind, and the law book for the safety of his estate, that upon any defamation of title or other encroachments, when his lands and properties are in hazard, he may know whither to repair for his direction and how to make his defence. And so methinks it should be with the members of the churches, as to their stated rights by their canon law. That there should be a kind of a penalty (if the hazard in such a defect be not punishment enough) on such delinquents as live members of Christ's visible kingdom here, and yet live without the platform, the ecclesiastical political charter of these churches.

I must needs say, and I wish I could whisper it so low that the echo might never rebound to Gath or Askelon, and yet be distinctly heard through these churches, that I fear the impression of the platform is almost extinct, if not quite worn out in the country; and that, as it was said in the day of battle under king Saul, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people, so here, though your Bible, which is the sword of the Spirit, is in every man's hand, yet possibly, this spear or necessary weapon in the defence of your gospel liberties, your platform, is scarce to be found in the hands of one in a thousand, through all the host of Israel.

I do therefore advise my country and these churches to furnish yourselves, and that you would encourage the printers in this design, and they can soon recruit you.

My honorable and dearest friends,

If we are pushed on to battle, and our weapons are then in the oar, we may justly suspect we shall be but too easy and cheap a conquest for assailants. Therefore furnish yourselves in good time with this piece of artillery, that you may be well fixed and equipped for service.

Do not you hear from the top of yonder proud and lofty mountain, the enemies' trumpets, and their drums beating a preparative? Therefore, let all the good soldiers of Christ be complete in this and all other parts of their armor, and at an hour's warning, unless you reckon your treasure not worth defending.

PETITION VI.

Whether it may not be very proper for these churches, after so long an interval, to admit of this address, namely, that they will please to meet or represent themselves in a provincial or general synod?

That if there be any thing in our church government which may want amendation, that (as they say) it may be done, *secundum usum sarum*, or regularly and according to the manner of these churches; or if there be any new forms, needful to be inserted,

or whatever else may in a way of order be thought necessary for the advance of religion, it may be fairly decided for the service of the whole. And also, if it shall then be judged prudent, our principles for the seizing and trial of the more ungovernable and stouter sort of delinquents and offenders, may be revised and somewhat enlarged, that so it may be made very easy for all particular churches to make out processes against them, and that they shall find the churches' fetters will hold them. That forever after all small juncto's of men, or particular persons, member or members of the churches (let their character be what it may be) shall be deterred from being so hardy and bold as to divulge their pernicious doctrines and seditious sentiments, with such presumption and such hopes of impunity as some of late have done.

Thus, right honorable and beloved in Christ!

I have nothing more at present to add by way of petition to yourselves, but only that you will please to take this poor piece of service in good part.

But though it be but as a little goat's hair, or a badger's hide or two, or skins not well dressed, yet it may be some way useful for the tabernacle. And though it will not shelter against storms of great shot, it may serve to cover and shield from some slighter arrows.

But let it be what it may be in every other man's opinion, it is in mine (as to design and intention) my love, honor, and loyalty to my God, prince, and country, for whose service I was born, according to the received maxim, *non soli nobis nati sumus.* And here I pay one part of my debt to those great creditors in

such species as I have; therefore, I hope for pardon from, and acceptance with, all of them.

My conclusion is with devoutest application to the supreme throne, that the Almighty God will bless the great Anne, our wise and Protestant princess, New England's royal nurse, and great benefactress, that she may live to see all the Protestant churches through her vast empire more virtuous and more united, and as they all meet and centre with their differing persuasions, by their love and loyal actions in her person and government. Let her most excellent majesty, next to Christ, continue absolute in her empire over their hearts, and as she has made such a complete conquest of all different parties within her dominions by her wise and virtuous measures, and thereby won all the fame of rule and sovereignty from her royal progenitors, who could never so charm such mighty nations. Let her reign continue the exactest model for all courts in Europe! And when she is full, replete, and satisfied with length of days, and the most glorious effects of a prosperous reign, let God favor her lasting and flourishing name with an unperishing monument, on which justice shall become obliged to inscribe this memento, namely: "Here lies in funeral pomp the princess of the earth, the storehouse of all ennobling and princely perfections," that if all the monarchs on earth, have lost their excellences, their *arcana imperii*, their state, wisdom, skill in government, and all sorts of heavenly, princely, and heroic virtues, here they may be found lodged in this one unparalleled monarch.

Let God bless his excellency and preserve the government of the province, and let it continue always

in the hands of natives, and let our country successively breed men of such merit, as shall always enamour imperial majesty with their loyalty and worth; and that their true deserts may ever purchase for them such a high station, whilst they shall plainly outweigh their rivals in the royal balance. And let them be always patrons to these churches, as an acknowledgment to the crown of heaven, as the settled condition of tenure they hold by, and possess such royal demesnes.

Let the great and good God of heaven and earth bless these churches, the beauty of the wilderness, and continue so noble a ministry as they now have, and prosper and requite their faithful and unwearied labors, and let him continue the succession, and furnish the next set with greater accomplishments and virtue.

Let Christ Jesus, the great shepherd, who hath the care of the flocks in the wilderness, preserve inviolable the inestimable privileges and liberties of these churches; and let them entail them, with all other civil and sacred rights and immunities which they now enjoy, as a sure estate of inheritance to the last posterity of this people. And let their children and children's children remain from generation to generation, until the world be done with and the sun has left shining.

So prays the meanest of all your servants in Christ,

JOHN WISE.

May 31, 1710.

AN ANSWER

TO THE FOREGOING PROPOSALS.

THE nobleness of parentage, by the laws of honor, entails on posterity (with other rights) a protection from all incivilities, but not from the austerer demands of justice, when that is affronted and violated. Justice keeping the golden rule (*quo dat suum cuique*) observes no other distinctions, than what it first makes in its distributions amongst the rich and poor, the noble and ignoble, it is no respecter of persons; for that it is superior to all men, and sits as a veiled empress, holding the balance to weigh out equal to each one according to the merits of the cause, and sees no man.

There being now under cognizance such as are of honorable families, and yet arrested and brought by due course of law to answer for high crimes, it must not be supposed rudeness in manners, though they be somewhat freely and rusty handled, whilst the prosecution is held agreeable with the impeachment and rule of justice. And as for myself, who am under commission from authority, to appear in defence of my country's sacred liberties, I can in my own justification affirm, that I have no dishonorable inclinations, but carry a just mind, so as to condemn no man or thing, but upon plain evidence, nor to aggravate any plea beyond its just bounds.

Therefore, though in the following pages there may be discerned a great liberty in argument, with a

mixture of satires, as though none but my inferiors were involved in the charge; yet ascribe it unto my love and veneration for so great an interest as I appear for, and not to any base intent of sinking the honor, or darkening the lustre of men. I neither desire, nor design to hurt any man, no, not so much as a hair on his head, but I solely aim at *error*, that is the butt I level for.

Thus having by this brief but sincere apology, secured the honor of my intentions, if I am worthy of belief, I shall no longer interrupt the process, but shall next, draw up the indictment upon which these proposals are to pass and abide a trial.

And this I shall do in a form borrowed from Sir Edward Cooke, the king's attorney, in the arraignment of Sir Walter Rawleigh, in these words.

Here is mischief, mischief in *summo gradu;* yea, exorbitant mischief. This is the charge I offer to make good against the proposals at the bar of common reason; in order thereto, I shall proceed, and expect to produce sufficient evidence under two heads.

I. By a few preliminary queries.

II. By a more critical examination of the proposals themselves.

I. As introductory, and for the bringing in further evidence against the criminal proposals, now upon their trial, I offer these following queries.

Query 1*st.* Whether the churches in New England are not fairly in possession of a form of government, by which they are distinguished from most of the reformed churches in the world, more than by

their grace? and if so (which no man that knows them will deny), then it must be some superior power or their own voluntary act, regularly obtained, that must out or dispossess them. Did an equal claimer appear, yet long and quiet possession holds against a writ of ejectment, a very strong plea in the sessions, both of reason and law; according to that acknowledged maxim, *Æquali jure, melior est conditio possidentis*, when two plead an equal right, he is in the best condition who is in possession; then it can be no less than a very indisputable right, and duly prosecuted with effect, that can dispossess these churches of their government.

Query 2d. Whether length of time has discovered any essential error in the government of these churches?

And First, it has, or Secondly, it has not.

1. If time has made any such discovery, yet the proposals have not been so fair as to detect it, or describe wherein or in what respect. The great service these churches with their government have done, in subduing and beautifying a wilderness, bespeaks some considerable respect from all men, who value wisdom or piety; that it must needs seem a harsh piece of justice, without any formal trial, for them to be driven from plenty, and sent to the doors of their own tenants, to beg for a booty out of that estate which was once their own at least, by a seizing in fact, if not in law; for that the proposals kill, and take possession with far less ceremony or legal formalities than Ahab did in gaining the right of Naboth's vineyard; when as if there is any essential error in their frame or constitution, and that they

have either ignorantly or treacherously assumed any peculiar prerogative which belongs to Christ's throne, as king, that was never their due to possess (and so being considered as usurpers, are dead in law), yet notwithstanding it would not have offended against the laws of gratitude in sending them to their graves, to have put some more marks of honor upon them, by certain solemn and usual forms of trial in the prologue of their dissolution; for they have been certainly great and good servants to the public, that if they deserve to die, they ought to die under all the marks of honor which justice can allow of, at the least a grand sessions, a jury, and liberty to make plea in their own defence, and under the influence of royal council, should have been granted; unless they may be treated as conquerors serve unfortunate pirates, who when taken, are without form of law hung up at the yard-arm.

2. But if no such discovery can be made, whether it is a wise and just thing for men to alter their government? The churches of Christ in this country have been in possession of this form of government; and it hath been established by certain legal and orderly familiarities and universal consent; and has continued upwards of threescore years. And as the poet says, *Pervarios casus per tot discrimina rarum tendimus in cœlum*, they have passed various changes, and great temptations, and yet to this day by this besom of discipline have been kept as clean swept as any churches of God in the world; and any such embroilments as have lately happened in the churches, have been more the folly of administrators, in not keeping to the rules of government, than from any

defect in the constitution. Then what reason have we to meditate a change? No, certainly; it will be more divine and agreeable with the law of our religious gratitude to join with the Rev. Mr. Nicholas Noyse in his doxology or use of triumph and praise for the great mercies he recites in his election sermon, p. 79, says he, Thanks be to God and the king! our houses and our lands are our own, without every man's being at the cost of a charter; and yet we have the liberty of our religion and the free exercise of it without subscribing new articles of faith, worship, or discipline; which is a great favor of God, if we have wisdom and grace to improve it rightly.

Query. Whether the right improvement will be to alter the scheme of our government or discipline, seeing nobody else will do it for us? No, surely! But it will be more agreeable, with both our policy and duty, to follow the good advice Mr. Cotton Mather leaves us in his Golden-street, page 40, in these words, "Where we have a platform left us that is according to the word of our gracious Lord, and the pattern in the mount; we shall be great enemies to ourselves if we do not keep to it."

Query 3*d.* Whether it be not great boldness for any particular gentlemen to invade, null, alter, or weaken so great a right and propriety, as is the government of these churches without their consent?

Government is the greatest blessing in the world, of a worldly nature; it is felony, cheaper by far to the loosers, to plunder men of their estate and wealth, nay, and of their lives too, than to despoil them of government; for by the latter you harass and worry them in the world with plagues and miseries, worse

than death itself, that the basest is far better than no government; a churlish tyranny is better than an insolent anarchy, where men are without law, and all hail fellows, not well, but badly met. And for men to alter or swap government, without all interested parties are agreed, is a very bold intrusion.

That, yea, that government which is in any good measure formed, and does agree with the natural freedom of human beings, and is adjusted by the laws of wisdom and honor, and plainly and fairly established; is too much of God in the world, and too great a royalty belonging to men, for any to play the knave or fool with.

And when a government hath done all things in the main well, and has reaped in a great stock of blessings, now to shuffle it out of place is fickleness and not policy; for a sensible series of blessings will always atone for some seeming defects in a constitution. Therefore when all Israel met at Ramah, in a general assembly, to alter their consular government which had been crowned with signal blessings, they got ill will in the court of heaven for it, 1 Sam. 8: 7.

The great success which attended, signified it to be a theocracy, and that it had more of God than of man in it, which is an argument, *cæteris paribus*, for all other governments, and so for this of New England churches, which has been honored with great success and many blessings from its beginnings to this day; therefore well does Mr. Cotton Mather describe the subject and advise his country, in his late sermon on the Street of Gold, says he (in a remarkable passage out of a letter), page 40: "Here is a temple built, more glorious than Solomon's, not of

dead stones, but living saints; which may tempt the greatest queen of Sheba to come and see, and allure even kings from far to come and worship me. Therefore, as to their government (says he), sirs, do not spoil it, oh! destroy it not! there is a blessing in it."

Query 4th. Whether by comparing the proposals and our platform, we do not find them repugnant and so contradictory, that if one stands the other must fall?

And that we can as soon reconcile a republic with an absolute monarchy, or the best sort of free states with a politic tyranny, or at least with an oligarchy, where the chief end of government is the enriching and greatness of its ministers; and this we may do when we have compounded these proposals and our platform, so that as that faithful and noble friend to these churches, the famous and learned Increase Mather, D. D., in an appendix to his dissertation concerning the sacrament, laments several plots conspiring the dissolution of these famous churches, in these words, namely: The bold attempts which have of late been made to unhinge and overset the congregational churches in New England, by decrying their holy covenant, etc. We may here justly heighten the complaint, and cry, *pro dolor! hinc lachrimæ!* Alas, alas! here is the grief! hence flow our tears! For here is a bold attempt indeed, not only to despoil the house of some particular piece of furniture, but to throw it quite out at windows; not only to take away some of its ornaments, but to blow up its foundations. For these bold attempts which that *worthy* complains of, seem now to be grown very

rampant; for here is in view a combination of workmen disaffected with the fashion of the old fabric, who (in pretence) design to repair, but in reality to ruin the whole frame. They appear (indeed) something in the manner of Nehemiah's men on the wall, (Neh. 4: 17), as it were with a trowel in one hand, with which they now and then put on a little untempered mortar, to plaster over a chink or two, where the old work by length of time is somewhat weather-beaten, to pacify the jealousies of the inhabitants, that they may think these builders (surely) are mending and not marring their old comfortable habitation. But in reality they have in the other hand a formidable maul, not as Nehemiah's weapon to defend, but to break down the building; for they are all hands at work banging the platform in pieces, upon which the old fabric is built. That may not the churches and all their lovers sigh and complain, as once Cicero did, *O tempora! O mores!* who would have expected such times and such things from such men?

Query 5th. We must needs then inquire, from whence the proposals derive their force? Who gives them letters of attorney, or commission to sue these churches (by a *quo warranto*) out of possession of their government? To me (I must needs confess) the attempt is very daring, and I see no way of reconciliation, unless the scheme drawn in the proposals can be fairly sheltered under some more authentic and specious umbrage, than the bold dictates, though of the wisest of men, when they are pleased to set themselves up oracles for their country.

So I come,

II. To the more critical examination of the proposals themselves, which I shall attend,

I. More generally.

II. More particularly, by taking a survey of them in their distinct sections.

I. More generally, by inquiring into their original, and nature.

1. By making a more exact inquest and search after their original, and in this debate they forfeit their essence, unless they can derive their pedigree, either,

(1) From God's immediate inspiration. Or,

(2) From ancient revelation. Or,

(3) From right reason, which is a ray of divine wisdom, enstamped upon human nature. Or,

(4) From the platform of the churches, which is a system of government collected by our ancestors out of several fountains, and principally from the Scriptures. Now in pursuing this distribution, I shall diligently inquire whether we can hear of their original under any of these heads.

(1) As to immediate inspiration I must needs presume, these gentlemen will not dare to assert, that they are sent immediately from God with this message to the churches; they are too good and wise to pretend (with enthusiasts) to immediate vision, or a spirit of prophecy; both the matter and manner of their writing, sufficiently convinces that these proposals are their own sentiments; they durst not put a, Thus saith the Lord upon them; such an inscription is too heavenly and royal for such coin; for both they and we know, according to Deut. 30: 12. It is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, who shall go

up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may know it and do it? There is no need to send messengers to that court, to learn by immediate and extraordinary information, either the laws of our duty or interest; for that God hath made all things sufficiently plain by this time of day, either by Scripture or reason, for the conduct and government of his churches; yea, of the subjects of his universal intellectual monarchy in this world.

(2) As to ancient revelation; Holy Scripture, that best, though not the biggest of books, is the saint's library, and the clergyman's pandects, whence he takes the rules for the management of his trust; so that it is very amusing that the Bible should be forgotten in drawing up such schemes as these; as though the usage of the pope's conclave, which turns the Bible out of doors for a wrangler, and gives the chief seat to tradition, etc., were here in fashion. Indeed, I cannot but esteem them very unfortunate proposals, to be turned so naked into the world as not to have the least tincture of Scripture to guard them from contempt; no, not so much as a citation, that might admit of so much as a strained consequence in their defence. And so, though less profane, yet they are also less politic than the most desperate of heretics, who always bring their errors on the stage guarded with Scriptures, and craftily endeavor to make their citations look with such an aspect as though they were encamped on their side. But here we have nothing for our faith to lean on, but so many austerer *ipse dixits* as bitter pills of death for the churches to swallow, without any of the confection of heaven or the sweet manna sprinkled

upon them; or else only so many naked human presumptions, as arrows or bolts too rashly shot out against the sides of our churches, and no word of Scripture to tip or feather them. Nay, it is very memorable, and I account fatal, and to be observed that God, that sacred title of the Almighty, with which the Holy Scriptures do so abound, is not once named (as I can find) in the whole treatise; as though the most sacred titles, as well as sections of that heavenly book would move fears and irritate jealousies, rather than pour down solace and comfort upon this undertaking. Therefore, in a word, the whole Bible is thrown by as a sealed parchment, or as one that never prophecies good to such adventurers. Therefore, these proposals being apprehended as sea rovers and indicted upon the statute of piracy; and upon examination being found without the prince of princes' colors, and yet doing great mischief in assaulting and wounding his churches and lawful subjects on their honest occasion; being bound on a voyage to their own country, they can noways in justice escape, but must pass under the sentence and endure the pains of death, for they are taken fighting without commission.

(3) As to reason. *Recta ratio*, right reason, that great oracle in human affairs, is the soul of man so formed and endowed by creation, with a certain sagacity or acumen (in many particular examples sharpened by the constitution of nature, by grace and study), whereby man's intellect is enabled to take up (*pro modulo*, or in a degree) the true idea or perception of things agreeable with, and according to their natures. So that if we bring these proposals under

examination by the laws of reason, we must inquire whether they are agreeable with the nature and constitution of the churches, if they fully harmonize with their principles of essence, then they may be enrolled for canons; but if they jar, and are plainly repugnant, we may then lawfully censure them, and pronounce them irrational. Whether these churches are constituted by Scripture or reason, yea or no, that is not our question, but being of such a frame or constitution as they now are and always have been, all who pretend to support and preserve them, and yet take such measures as will utterly overthrow and dissolve them, such repairers have apparently deserted the dictates and government of right reason.

And here we may collect an induction of some few hints of certain particulars for evidence; the platform asserts a classis to be no gospel form of church order; the proposals say it is, or they abuse our credulity. The proposals order the association to have the first cognizance of church cases; our government says, no, it belongs to the jurisdiction of particular churches. The proposals give power to the association to limit elections, and to direct them; but our government says, no, it will not consent; the election of officers is the prerogative of the churches, and they will not, as yet, part with it, etc. So that when we can by the rules of grammar, resolve yea and nay, to be the same voice and word, then you may reconcile the proposals and the platform; that certainly whatever there be of religion, the method is apparently disagreeable with common reason.

(4) As to the platform. I shall represent it by a kind of a short prosopopœia, thus, namely, inquiring

whether the proposals are reduced from this fountain, the platform with all its chapters, and with one joint consent, as plain as the tongue in their head can utter it, say, that ever since it possessed the government, so much as dreamed of them. It may say with destruction (Job 28: 22), we have heard of the fame of these things with our ears, but never imagined so much as a seminal virtue in our own being, for their procreation; but rather starts with the news of their approach, out of fear of its own dissolution, from their repugnant and formidable nature. Therefore, as in a grievous fright from surprise, cries out with Athaliah, treason, treason! And begs that zeal and conscience, those two solicitors for the crown, will at this grand court of Oyer and Terminer, implead and prosecute them as traitors to the prince of peace, and felons to these churches, Christ's loyal subjects. So I come,

2. To inquire into the nature of these proposals, by surveying their composition and properties.

(1) Their composition. They seem a conjunction of almost all the church governments in the world, and the least part is congregational. Indeed, at the first cast of the eye, the scheme seems to be the spectre or ghost of Presbyterianism, or the government of the church by classes; yet if I do not mistake, in intention there is something considerable of prelacy in it, only the distinct courts of bishops, with the steeples of the churches, tithes, surplice, and other ornaments, do not shew themselves so visible, as to be discerned at the first look, yet with a microscope you may easily discern them really to be there in embryo, *et in rerum natura;* for this is a known

maxim, *Quod necessario subintellegitur non deest.* What is necessarily understood, or lies hid in the intention of a design, is really there, by a just interpretation; therefore these proposals which dare revolt so far at a step, as these have done, must needs understand no less in their aim, than an ennobling government for clergymen, which our princes and parliaments have adorned the churches with. This seems rational, that those which never stick at robbing the churches of such an immense treasure, as the proposals carry off, will never stand. Shall we! shall we! at the offer of a bishopric, which is a barony with all its rights and royal appurtenances.

There is also something in it which smells very strong of the infallible chair, to assume the power of making rules to engross all principles of process, the right of election, the last appeal, the negative vote, and all superintending power in matters ecclesiastic, as the prerogative of clergymen, distinct from all other estates and ministers in government; or thus, for the clergy to monopolize both the legislative and executive part of canon law, is but a few steps from the chair of universal pestilence, and by the ladder here set up, clergymen may, if they please, clamber thus high; for when they are invested with what is in these proposals provided and intended for them, who then can control them but the Almighty himself? as was said of those daring men, Gen. 11 : 6. And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do; for who can now withhold from them infallibility, or stop the direful and definitive sentence? Who can limit their power, or shorten their arm in their executions? Their bulls

can now upon any affront, bellow and thunder out a thousand terrible curses; and the poor affrighted and invassalled laity, both princes and subjects (being hereat in the grave, put under one and the same topic) must forfeit their salvation, if they do not tamely submit, and obediently become their executioners; for that it is now evident that all power is, if not really given, yet formerly stolen, and in intent bequeathed to them.

(2) Their properties. The first property is disorder. Order is both the beauty and safety of the universe; take away the decorum whereby the whole hangs together, the great frame of nature is unpinned and drops piece from piece; and out of a beautiful structure we have a chaos. These proposals are therefore very mischievous, if not in matter, yet in the manner of production; they are full of disorder, being things born out of due time, their conception is without countenance, from the rule of order. Indeed, there is no statute to be found that will justify the first coitus (intercourse) of the parents, neither will any allow their social life; that the birth must bear the attainder of being both begotten and born out of lawful wedlock, and so in point of honor fall under the censure of the Levitical law, and must be kept back from promotion; for (Deut. 32), "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation."

That to pass all other remarks, if we are under mistake in the assertions; I then demand and inquire, where is that lawful authority which published legal banns, with the consent of all the interested persons, and the regular consummation of the match? If any rule can be found to shelter and honor the concep-

tion and birth, let it be produced; and if escaping other felonies with life, this scandal shall be taken off; but otherwise it must remain as a bar to the tenth generation.

The second property is usurpation. The proposals apparently usurp the church prerogatives. It has been asserted, and it is true, these churches have been settled upon the platform of their own government for upwards of sixty years; they have often revised and reinforced the establishment, both as the principles of their consociation and union in general, and the form of government for every church in particular. Then for these proposals, without license, to assume a legislation, and form of a government, so repugnant to their own, can be no less than usurping a dominion over them, contrary to the rule 1 Pet. 5: 3, neither as being lords over God's heritage. Lesser acts against empire hath cost many a bold man his head. What! for a particular knot or junto of gentlemen to make so bold with a settled government as to pick out all the ennobling royalties, liberties, and enfranchisements in it, and sacrifice them to their own ambition! It is enough to put mankind into an uproar.

It is fresh in memory, that when some of our English princes (and one would think, if any men may, they may be allowed to aspire, yet when they) have presumed on less things than these proposals reach after, in gratifying their aim at an absolute monarchy, when as they have not dared to lay out with such freedom, a new form of government, with a wide mouth gaping to devour the English liberties (as these proposals do to the churches), but only with

much secrecy, covin (fraud), and policy, they have by some more clandestine measures been intruding upon the ancient liberties of the English nation. Every one knows what direful convulsions this has bred in the bowels of the kingdom. And may it not serve to enliven this plea to invite all such who are with Plato, owners of a great genius at inventing new, or modelling old government, to try their skill in altering the English monarchy, and see how it will be probated? That is, suppose you should venture to interdict the royal assent, or convert the present monarch into a duke of Venice, or dissolve the lords in parliament, or (rather in harmony with this scheme) turn the burgesses and knights of the shires (as a sort of men not fit for politics in parliament) out of doors? And whether our sovereign, the peerage, or subjects of English liberties would take it well? And whether Christian men may make bolder with the established government of Christ's churches, than with that which belongs to civil affairs? In honor to the New England churches, and with veneration for the English monarchy, I dare assert, that there is in the constitution of our church government more of the English civil government in it, and it has a better complexion to suit the true English spirit, than is in the English church or any other, both as to the legislative and executive part of government. Indeed, considering how things are at home in church and state, I have been sometimes ready to query, why the nation should be so enamoured with their civil, and yet so careless and regardless of their gospel liberties, so as to trust their consciences with their clergy, more immediately, and yet will not venture

their estates with their learned judges without the privilege and mediation of juries; as though they were more careful and wise in securing their estates than their souls, and valued one far more than the other. But I shall go on with the comparison.

(1) As to the legislation, our New England convocation admits, and the government does profess the fraternity as necessary to the being of all synodical assemblies, that as far as legislation spiritual is left to men, and as they have a great treasure, namely, their salvation embarked, so they have a great interest in the management of it; and herein they agree with the English caution and wisdom in the modes of civil government of the empire, for the commons are one great estate in the civil legislation, and they have a great power in the management of that great trust.

(2) As to administration, or the executive part of government, our New England government grants a juridical power to the fraternity, and makes them proper judges in all ecclesiastical cases and administrations, on persons cognizable, or that must pass a trial *juridice*, which is agreeable with the constitution, nature and practice of the civil government of the empire; for under the prosecutions of law, no English subject, in life, limb or estate, must be passed upon but by the judgment of his peers; yea, in all pleas of the crown, such confidence has the government put in the loyalty and discretion of the commons, that our English juries are stated arbitrators and umpires between our prince and his subjects. Yea, such a dependence has the whole nation in keeping these liberties in their own hands, that they

reckon the commons in Parliament and juries in the commonwealth to be the great pillars of English honor and liberties, and they esteem them as ramparts built by the wisdom of our ancestors to defend us from tyranny and slavery.

That considering the affinity in these two constitutions, one would be ready to query whether the heroic true English spirit is not parent to both? or whether they are not equal debtors to the gospel for their original? The improvement of this comparison is briefly this: suppose some of the great ministers of state should venture to sweep away all those civil enfranchisements which are Englishmen's birthright, and set up an arbitrary power with a pretence of doing justice and judgment in the kingdom, by more concise and expedite measures, whether they might not be seized? And whether the statutes would not be chains strong enough to hold them as traitors to a well formed government, and then laid fast by a mittimus for great usurpers? And whether the plea will not hold in just proportions on the other side of the comparison?

Third property, riotous. The nature of a riot may (in part) be thus described: it is an unlawful assembly of more than three met in one place to do an unlawful act, as violently breaking down of walls, and pulling up of hedges, and wrongfully entering into other men's rights and possessions, and that in affray and terror of the people. In managing this plea, I shall only desire that the illegality of the assembly which formed these proposals, with the objects and things they intend, and the ancient boundaries which they plainly invade, together with the fearful apprehen-

sions that many good and sober people in the vicinage have concerning the enterprise, may be critically examined; and I doubt not but when we obtain the suffrage of this honorable court, it will determine the impleaded criminals are of a riotous nature, and so the indictment will stand more valid against them.

Fourth property, sacrilegious, etc.

Fifth property, rebellious.

It grieves me to utter the epithets agreeable with the nature of these proposals; yet they must blame their own nature, but not my justice, if I give them but their due; for I find them in the breach of a royal statute, yea, I think of a penal law. This is plain; they take away the liberties, privileges, discipline, and government of these churches, all which are established to them by the law, and that not only by their own canons, but by the laws of this province, as by a royal Magna Charta, namely, in an act for the settlement and support of the ministers, page 3, in these words: "The respective churches in the several towns within this province, shall at all times hereafter use, exercise, and enjoy all their privileges and freedoms respecting divine worship, church order, and discipline, and shall be encouraged in the peaceable and regular profession and practice thereof."

This act (as one says on the great charter of English liberties) deserves to be written in letters of gold, and hung up in all our houses of God's public worship, to signalize the zeal (in the presence of God, angels, and men) of the authority of the throne and empire for the establishing of these churches, and Christ's interest in them. Now, considering that the

power, policy, and grace of the English crown should thus lock up the churches' treasure for them, and set such a sentinel, with the flaming sword of justice in its hand, to dread and awe intruders, it must needs be a very bold action (if it be not plump rebellion) to attempt or design such a sequestration or embezzlement as the proposals do.

Sixth property, unfaithfulness, etc.

Seventh property, ingratitude.

For the stewards of great families, when advanced to honor and a profitable trust by the free election and grace of noblemen, when their lords are laid down to rest and sleep too securely, or are gone out of town, with this presumption, that their estate is secure, it being put under the care of loyal trustees and thankful servants; now for such trustees and stewards, upon such opportunities, to pocket up or load away the riches of the family, and set up for themselves, and leave the proprietors beggars whom they found in wealth and plenty, is both infidelity and ingratitude. Now let the churches be plucked and deplumed as the proposals intend, and they are, after the possessing a fair estate, become bankrupts. And let those stewards that are guilty answer for the robbery; for my part, I will have no share in it.

Eighth property, impolicy.

And I am sure there is a great store of this in these proposals. I shall instance but in two particulars.

(1) In timing the challenge that is here made, to brave a rich and powerful enemy at so great a distance, and invite him by sound of trumpet to a pitched battle, when surprise and ambushments

might be laid, and do the work with the expense but of a tenth part of the blood which this may cost. This is not agreeable with the art of war; Ahithophel would have put a derision upon such measures. Jacob's sons, when taking a bloody design in hand, first contrived to stupefy and blunt the courage of their enemies, and then came upon them by surprise ere they could arm in their own defence (though it does not justify their cruelty, yet it magnifies their subtlety), for thereby they brought their design about, whereas if they had gone a more blunt and daring way to work, Simon and Levi had not been half a breakfast for the Hivites, Gen. 34: 25.

So here, had the churches been convened, and no noise made of this design, they possibly (though their treasures are fortified by right, and so in safety, and their troops more, ten to one, than their enemies) yet by ambushments or surprise they might have chanced to have been coakered or conquered out of all, by being flattered, overawed, or over-argued into a surrender or submission; but we may now rationally hope the alarm will rouse the whole camp, and each squadron will rebound it to the next with a *hinc proximas urit ucalogon;* and so the plot may, upon a defeat, blame its own bad conduct more than its fortune.

(2) The design itself (*quo ad fluem executionis*), let it come to birth, as is designed or desired, and the very heavens would either frown upon or laugh at it for its folly. If we examine the climate of the country, the degrees of latitude, and the severe stars that chiefly govern, there is no good policy in the design; so that methinks the universal frame of nature cries

it down for a *non compos mentis*, for there are no such great creatures as are here conceived can fare in hard cold countries as the chameleon does in warm; there must be a very great horde to support them, and nature does honestly confess she cannot answer the bills of fare which belong to their table and do her duty to the royal exchequer; and this must be maintained, or all breaks to pieces.

Again, let it be considered, whether it be not great intellectual weakness, or want of policy, for one generation to contrive needless loads for the next, especially when they may get as well to heaven without carrying such packs along the road? It has been universally the humor of mankind, according to the laws of nations and nature, when roused by the regular dictates of self-love, to endeavor that every following generation might be more lightsome, free, noble, and happy than that which did immediately precede.

They say the Chinese dig clay and use it not, but leave it heaped, or in pits, mellowing for the next age. Every prudent man builds his house for duration. The prince enlarges and betters his dominions. The peasant sweats to advance his estate, and then each leaves all in greater triumph to their heirs.

The Kentish yeomanry are had in honor to this day, for not stooping to the conqueror till they had conditioned, and thereby secured their fair estates of lands, in fee and freeholds forever from all forfeiture by felony, according to their country proverb,

> The father to the bough,
> The son to the plough.

Such is the merciful foresight of mankind, and his

charitable care and forecast for such as shall follow, though they may never be seen or known by their wise progenitors.

But here is plainly a conspiracy very heterogeneous to such judicious acts of human providence; a design plainly, if not perfectly to enslave, yet to bring posterity into a needless vassalage and thraldom.

This is an acknowledged verity amongst wise statists, that that monarch who has the command of the seas, can at his pleasure command any maritime country. And so, those men who have the command and empire of the conscience of mankind, can command their estates, and indeed whatsoever else is grateful to them.

Then, whereabouts are we in our politics, when we have delivered up the royalties that are challenged? and in what a weak capacity shall we leave posterity? Nay, these virtuosos themselves seem to be hardened, with the ostrich, against their own natural issue, unless the thing would chance to spring up as quick as Jonah's gourd, and hang as full of pearls and diamonds as the seas and rocks of India, and they themselves shall have the first shake, and fill all their coffers with this harvest, or at least, that they are assured that they can and shall entail their offices as securely as their lands upon their own children, as was the order of priesthood and the fashion of the house of Levi. But alas! These modes are all worn out and made null; and such men's sons as we are now treating of, fall in with the multitude, and must carry their equal share of the common load; that should the project prevail under their management (might they but look up out of their graves in about

half an age), they may complain in elegy, after the manner of Virgil with his, *Sic vos non vobis hos ego versiculos feci, tubit alter honorem.* These verses I made, but another man carries away the honor. So these gentlemen might even say, we have contrived to greaten the clergy, and with bees have filled a rich hive; and built a fair nest well feathered, but our posterity we see is never the warmer, nor will they lick their fingers of it; and not only so, but are the men that must make up the tenth sheaf, and deliver the tenth cock, calf, and lamb unto others out of poor demesnes. And also it may justly beget a mournful remembrance in posterity of their parents, and make them often look with a sad countenance upon their fathers' graves, not because they are dead, but because they had not ended their days sooner, namely, because this scheme (so oppressive and cruel to their small freeholds) had not taken effect under their management.

2. We come now, according to engagement, to take a survey of the proposals in their distinct sections.

SECTION I.

That the ministers of the country form themselves into associations, that may meet at proper times to consider such things as may properly lie before them.

Answer. There is no doubt or question to be made, but that the ministers and pastors of Christ's churches may meet in greater or lesser numbers; for they are

masters of themselves, and no more accountable how they spend their time than other men are; but to meet at certain times and places as political incorporate bodies, or in the form of classes, for the exercise and management of government, this must be determined by some precept issued from a legislative power; and without this, such who gave the advice and exhibit the call, are very despotic and arbitrary, and those who attend it are servile in their submission; for that there is no man in his right wits will take this honor unto himself, "but he that is called of God, as was Aaron, Heb. 5: 4." The offer or invitation bids defiance to our constitution; for our platform denies the classical state of the church under Christ (chap. 2, sect. 5). Therefore, this is a daring article in the criminal's case, and as it strikes at the vitals of our government, it must in the trial bear weight accordingly.

Section. And that each of these associations has a moderator for a certain time, who shall continue till another be chosen, who may call them together upon emergencies.

Answer 1. What limits shall be assigned for the precincts of every distinct association? Or may we conclude the best model is to follow the civil distinctions made by the counties? And if so, then the pastors of each classis are scattered through a territory of twenty or thirty miles square, more or less, and then it must needs follow that the moderator, to discharge his duty, provide messengers to cite all these distinct gentlemen upon any emergency; but the great difficulty is, what kind of messenger it must be, whether king Solomon's tell-tale bird may

be trusted with matters of such importance? Or, whether the moderator must reimburse him? Or, must he go on his own cost, contrary to equity in that law? 1 Cor. 9: 7, "Who goeth to warfare on his own charge?" It is apparently an error, that care hath not been taken to find horse and man, and baiting-places for both on this journey, otherwise for a legislative power to prescribe chargeable offices, and leave them destitute of a temporal support, they must of necessity die to save charges, or turn mendicants, or hope in their travel to meet with the prophet's juniper-tree; all which are as disagreeing with good reason as the proposal itself.

2. The moderator has an unlimited power during the prorogation of the assembly. (1) He must judge of emergencies, that he may summon the members; and being left vested with such a prerogative, if after he has made his citation he recants, he can then countermand his own order, though the gentlemen should be all mounted and ready to move. (2) If there chance to be an emergency of common concernment, if he finds his own favorites involved in the guilt and danger, he then gives no notice, but stifles the business and so cheats the company. (3) And upon any disgust, it is now at his mercy to null the whole frame; for he must be in place till another be chosen, and how will they get together if he will not give the word? Unless they are creators of themselves the second time, as they were the first. That to institute such charitable designs without a fund, and tie such trust and dominion on the shoulders of men after such a lax and careless manner, and leave them at such loose ends, as easily to make fools of

men; for my own part, I slight such methods in government.

SECTION II.

That questions and cases of importance, either provided by themselves, or by others presented unto them, should be upon due deliberation answered.

Answer. I suppose there is no intent to erect a young or mock-royal society, or that all questions and cases of experimental philosophy be admitted; if it should be so, I think this somewhat touches upon the prerogative of the crown, and may be called in question under the head of high misdemeanors, if not *pro crimini lesæ majestatis;* but, howsoever, though there be no distinction made, yet we will take it in a more charitable sense, and that the proposal (in intent) is wholly confined to church matters; and if so, we must then inquire, how many deep questions can be found in our country grown mouldy with the Gibeonites' bread, for want of wise handling? Or can we find any such heaps of gordian knots as *opprobria theologorum*, — The reproach of divines laid up against (the time) this consistory meet to untie them, that we must needs molest our old settlements for their solution? For my own part I cannot comprehend the proposal, unless it be a plot to introduce the enemy that is in the rear, that is, by making show of great illuminations we may be dazzled with their lustre, and thereby the more easily taken in the snare here laid. But, however, to conclude, as the wise man says of things more physical or artificial, Eccl. i. so I

may say of questions and cases, there are none new under the sun. They have been all well spoken to; every learned casuist is full of them, etc., and Ames and Turettinus, etc. for a few shillings will do no more in a month for an inquisitive mind, than this proposal can do in the tedious apprenticeship of many years; then certainly, computing by rules of proportion, we can noways expect that the clear gains should countervail the great damage we shall sustain by swapping governments upon these terms.

SECTION III.

That advice be taken by the associated pastors from time to time, ere they proceed to any action in their particular churches, which may be likely to produce any embroilments.

Answer. This is very dishonorable, and also a very unreasonable encroachment upon the officers and government of the churches.

It divests the officers of the free exercise of that office-authority which God's word and our platform places in them (read Platf. chap. 10, sect. 8, 9). These are to feed and rule the churches, they are to receive the accusations, and prepare them for the churches' hearing. This section of the platform fixes both process and judicature in particular pastors and churches without any limitation, but the proposal allows no process to be opened till letters of license be obtained from the classes. But why may not all other persons in office be thus fettered as well as the

pastors of churches? Are these the only students of wisdom and righteousness, that are strangers to the nature of actions, to the rule and the application of it? All other officers in trust and commission, who are wise and loyal, execute the hardest articles in their employ, and who may say to them why do you so? Our judges never stick to hang a man, so long as their commissions and the law will bear them out, and they themselves are left to be interpreters of both. And that this proposal is a sanctuary for officers against a storm. Alas! the most that we can make of it is a covering of fig-leaves, and may serve for a harbor to cowards and fools, but not for men of spirit and conduct. The dream of an embroilment can never counterpoise duty; if men are trusted with duty, they must consult that, and not events. If men are placed at helm to steer in all weather that blows, they must not be afraid of the waves or a wet coat.

It is certain it was no diminution for Timothy to carry St. Paul's cloak and parchments from Troas, 2 Tim. 4: 13. Yet for particular pastors in the management of church government to do little more than to carry the copies and parchments of associations about the country, and hang up their decrees on the pillars of churches, according to the order of the proposal, can never entitle them to such a tribute of love and honor as the Scripture does assign them, as the purchase of their great merits (1 Tim. 3: 5. 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13). Such bequestments as these from the fountain of honor, must signify more than some such poor low servile business (noways too high for Jeroboam's priest to execute) as is laid out in the propo-

sal, but especially if they have but some one head man to conduct and draw up the conclusion.

Section. That the associated pastors do carefully and lovingly treat each other with that watchfulness which may be of universal advantage.

Answer 1. Whether watchfulness is proper, or a term applicable to persons so qualified, so sacred, and in so high a function as those who are here intended?

2. Whether to institute watchmen over watchmen, be not the way to distribute the clergy into inferior and superior degrees, and so *ad infinitum*, etc., or at least till the churches of this country (for you must know this is one proposal made for their support), be supported and well ordered by suffragans, metropolitans, and other great pillars of those churches, where clergymen in higher orbs inspect those in the same order, who are beneath them in trust and dignity?

3. But if you intend honestly only the watch of one brother over another, as is the duty of all Christian people, one towards another, then I cannot understand the sense of the word, as applicable here, with the least good meaning or syntax imaginable.

(1) For though there is a design of new modelling of men, and bringing clergymen into another form of society, yet there is no intent divulged, that they shall cohabit, bed and board together upon certain charters, as the friars or benedictines, in their royal monasteries. Indeed, the section might have been engrossed with the first canons of the Dominicans, or St. Bennet's laws, when first entering upon their monastic life; but it noways agrees with this constitution.

(2) For, as for the occasional meeting of men, eminently sober and virtuous, what business can be supposed for a watch, for about the space of twenty-four, or forty-eight hours in such examples? Very bad men will hold out longer than so, in a good behavior, under the awe of but some one venerable person, or a grave Cato.

(3) And when these eminent persons, members of the association, are dispersed to their own proper precinct, the proposal surely does not intend they shall follow the chargeable example of princes, who usually keep spies in each other's courts, to inform themselves how things are managed there; for it is plain, the charge and expense in managing such a watch as this will reduce all clergymen to this dilemma, that they must either vote up the salary or vote down the method. But then the thing itself is not fair; for it would seem as though they watched more for the halting than the help of each other. But as for the proposal, a riddle I found it, and a riddle I leave it.

Section. And that if any minister be accused to the association where he belongs, of scandal or heresy, the matter shall be there examined, and if the associated ministers find just occasion for it, they shall direct a calling of the council, by which such an offender is to be proceeded against.

Answer. I must boldly and freely inquire, whether this is an honest answer to the question propounded in the head of the proposals? Or whether in reality this is the supporting, preserving, and well ordering the interest of the churches there meant? If you mean as you speak, I am sure there is either some

dishonesty or some misunderstanding between the question and the answer; for it cannot possibly be otherwise, unless the parts of speech are lately become a chaos, and all words are not only of the doubtful gender, but such unreasonable epicenes, that not only both kinds, but both contraries are signified in them; or thus, that to build, plant, repair, pluck up, pull down, and demolish, are all now become convertible terms; for take away these high prerogatives from the churches, and you take away their being. These and such like royalties, are their *formalis ratio*, or the formal cause (*per quam res est id quod est*) by which they are what they are; and this will be very evident, if we do but read a short lecture on the churches' essence anatomized, or let their essential and constituent parts and powers be viewed in the history and philosophy of their own beings, and we shall quickly discern your mistake; for that end read platform, chap. 5, sect. 2. Ordinary church power, namely, or privilege, belongs to the brotherhood, and may be acted or exercised immediately by themselves. And more directly to the case in hand, look into chap. 10, sect. 6. Where there we read, If an elder offend incorrigibly, the matter so requiring, as the church had power to call him to office, so they have power, according to order (the council of other churches, where it may be had, directing thereto) to remove him from his office; and being now but a member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church that had power to receive him into their fellowship, hath also the same power to cast him out, that they have concerning any other members.

Now herein we find an essential article in the government and being of these churches, that they have and hold such jurisdiction over their own members; that the highest tribunal ecclesiastical on earth is there; and that their own delinquent private members and public officers are triable only there, and there they must receive the definitive sentence and abide the execution of it.

And if so, then I shall make bold to revive my query again, namely: Whether the proposal is either honorable, civil, or honest, thus to tumble down at one blow this high seat of authority? and to break open our prison doors and loose the fetters of our great offenders? and at the best to take them out of our hands, and make their mittimus to foreign pastors to do justice upon them, and yet in the mean time to profess they are doing us no other injuries, but only repairing and mending our churches? Again, whether this is fair and workman-like amongst honest men?

But to make a stop here, I must remind you that this head is not to be passed over slightly; for this is the one thing in the essence of our churches, it is their peculiar enfranchisement and birthright, and we may not sell it with Esau at a cheap market; if we do, we undo ourselves; for indeed you must know, here lies the marring or making of our churches; here is laid up their strength, and here hangs the pick-lock of their treasure; for by this key stolen or wrenched out of their hands, the churches of Christ in the world have been exposed and plundered for more than a thousand years, and many of them have nothing at this day left them, comparatively, but a poor, starved, shabby implicit faith, and a dull, faturnal, blunt, and

blind obedience, that a man would scarcely give a groat for both of them. In a word, the usurpations of the pastors since the great revolt, having unshackled one another and broke loose from the restrictions they are justly subjected to under the churches' power of privilege, has utterly undone the Christian world, from this root of bitterness and pride, from this seed sprung up, the man of sin, as we have it in an anomalous author, namely, the Eletherians, page 4, in words to this purpose: "Then a little priest had an opportunity to establish himself; then there appeared in the temple of God that anti-Christ, who calls himself the vicar of Christ." And then the same author going on to discover the original of this monstrous birth, he says thus: "Anti-Christ was conceived in, by, and from certain affectations of ecclesiastical preëminences." As though he should say, the first spawn or embryo of that insolent Hector, or aspiring Nimrod (who first robbed the laity of their Christian liberties, and then hunted down the potentates of the world, and brought them as a rich spoil into his habitation of violence), took its commencement from this principle, namely, from the clergy's assuming to themselves this ecclesiastical preëminence, namely: first, their obtaining an exemption from the cognizance of the churches for the crimes, and then in possessing themselves of the sole and absolute jurisdiction (by a despotic government) over the churches themselves.

But however things have been hitherto, I shall no longer uphold the debate by revising the abuses that have been done to the Christian churches by an ambitious clergy in the ages past, which might more

amply be discovered by tracing the footsteps of the great apostasy; but I shall end the whole dispute on this head by drawing up a protest, and denying the jurisdiction of the court, erected and opened by the proposals, as being perfectly disagreeing and repugnant to our former settlements and present constitution.

SECTION IV.

That the candidates of the ministry undergo a due trial by some or other of the association, concerning their qualification for the evangelical ministry; and that no particular pastor or congregation employ any one in occasional preaching who has not been recommended by a testimonial under the hands of some association.

Answ. To monopolize (in the great articles of trade) some very rich species, and of such use for the good of kingdoms that they must needs perish without it, or be greatly injured by excessive sales, is accounted by good commonwealth's men intolerable; for such men or companies so invested can, with Joseph in Pharaoh's court, buy and sell a country at their own prices; even so, when these churches have delivered up the right in their candidates to the classes, they may then go a begging to their doors for the ministers, and be contented to take what they are pleased to put off, and at their own lay.

Obj. But you may object, *Exomni ligno, non fit Mercurius.* Therefore the judicious must determine and set their mark upon what is merchantable, and

throw by what is refuse ware, or else there may be great damage done for want of caution. And thus we come to the plain point in hand, which is to be debated by disputing this question, namely:

Ques. Whether a trial by association is preferable to the old custom of the churches, in promoting their candidates for the ministry to public trust?

Answ. In the reply, I shall first consider our candidates under trial, as to their qualification; and secondly, implead the proposal on a just prejudice from the corruption of the clergy.

First. We may consider our candidates under trial as to their qualifications. 1. As to their human learning; and here we absolutely object against the trial of associations, as bootless, useless, and perilous, both to them and to us.

(1) As to the association, it is no diminution or trespass upon the laws of honor or truth to affirm, "That the settled ministry in general (with some reasonable exception) is less expert in grammar and points of philosophy, than our learned children are at the degree of junior bachelors," and that from disuse, proved from all experience, *Nam usus promotos facit;* and also for the sake of more divine studies, which crowd out those first ideas a great pace, according to that observation on a learned memory, *Imago imaginem expellit, aliisque, aliæ succedunt,* for as one wave thrusts out another, so one idea another. Therefore it is pity to expose such venerable persons to the hazard in this service, lest when they become posers of others, they should be posed themselves. I do remember an odd story when I was at college; it was retained as a reproach on a very divine and worthy

person. Though he was bred in England, a good scholar, and also had been a schoolmaster, and had taught the grammar in his young times, but yet having laid by in a great measure the use of such things for the sake of more valuable and heavenly speculations, being at the solstice, and one of the corporation ventured in the hall to propose this question to one of the commencers:

Quot sunt Cæla?

To which the lad, with sauciness enough, yet with a grammatical niceness, only answered,

Sed audi.
Mascula duntaxat calos vacitabis et Argos:

That prisians head will in likelihood be kept bleeding from one generation to another, by reason of some unlucky strokes, if this form be established, and that to the great detriment of those who strike the blows.

2. To us. Academical learning we profess to be a very essential accomplishment in the gospel ministry. It is introduced by the ordinary blessing of God upon human endeavors, to supply the place of the cloven tongues, and those other miraculous gifts and endowments of mind impressed upon Christ's ambassadors, whereby fishermen commence (*per saltum*) doctors of divinity, and in an instant were stocked with such principles of religion, reason, and philosophy, that they were capable to dispute with Athens itself, and baffle the greatest wits she could produce, in defence and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, Acts 17: 18.

Thus it is very reasonable that the churches should be well assured of the sufficiency of the learning of those persons, ere they presume on the ministry; yet there is a fairer way in view, fuller of honor and safety, than what the proposal directs to.

Our academy is the store-house of learning, and this all mankind will assent to. When you have lost the company of the muses, there they are found in their freeholds, where they hold the balance of honor amongst the learned. This is the place, if not of the goddess Minerva or Apollo, yet the Bethel or temple of God himself; the God of wisdom, where he, as chief architect, with his under workmen, form wise and learned men, and where you may have them wrought off at first hand. Then certainly here we are to secure our credulity and confidence in this affair; here we are to know whether they be of the right stamp, yea or no.

That of all men living, the best and most infallible standard for the philosophical accomplishments of our candidates, is the judgment of the honorable president, and noble fellows of our famous college; for this I am sure must needs stand for a verity, that the judgment of a real honest and skilful artificer (keeping close to his shop) concerning the nature and qualities of an edge-tool which he hath wrought and hammered on his own anvil, out of its first rude matter, must certainly excel him that hath been long from the trade, that only takes it, turns and tries the edge slightly, or has but a transient view of it; so that hence we may fairly infer, that (as to human learning) Harvard's Commendamus is most valuable and sufficient, and justly supplants these testimonials.

2. With respect to the more evangelical qualifications of the gospel ministry, we shall be ready to honor the sufficiency of the associates, yet must take liberty to object a few things.

(1) Suppose we, that the trial is made *per contionem ad clerum*, by preaching a sermon, in audience of the association, and I think this is the way proposed and generally agreed upon, as the square or rule most agreeable with Gunter, to take the dimensions, length, and breadth of our candidates by.

Reply 1. What can a sermon do at deciding this question? for that the most sensible and valuable, who are usually most humble and tender, are liable by this stupendous examination, to be baffled by their own temerity, and quite dashed out of countenance by their own fear. Alas! upon their first entrance upon the stage, to appear in so august and awful a presence, this must needs disanimate and put their thoughts into a ruffle, as having in their affrighted minds the resemblance of their going into the Spanish inquisition, rather than dwelling amongst the softer measures of the gospel. Luther himself (that unparalleled instance of spirit and magnanimity, as I remember of his life) hardly ever got over something of a panic fear attending him through the course of his ministry; and, indeed, men of the quickest senses are most liable to these paroxysms. Then surely to put our tyros to this test, which may daunt and dispirit the greatest hero, is noways proportionable, especially seeing they may under the inspection of learned, honest, and judicious men, both pastors and churches, and thereby under covert of more private invitations (with all their natural fear) creep into

this noble work, and keeping on as their courage and strength will bear the journey, may, *gradatim*, attain a just and sufficient probation, as our learned youth have hitherto done.

Indeed, the bold and brazen who can make a greater figure with half the stock, by many shirking tricks and dissembling artifices, defended and supported with confidence and delivery, may obtain the *euge juvenis*, that they noways deserve, as will be found when they come to be detected by a more dilatory search, or a more tedious analysis made of them. That, to conclude, as the proverb is, *Una hirundo non facit ver*, — one swallow makes not the spring. So in this trial, one good or mean sermon cannot determine the man, or umpire his case.

(2) Suppose the trial must be made and the question determined by a person's conversation. And this is a very great article in the state of all serviceable men, and especially in the ministry. (1 Tim. 4: 12. 1 Pet. 5: 3.) Being ensamples to the flock. Then certainly a more intimate converse and society is a very invincible plea. By the laws and customs of England, the vicinage must be allowed, as affording the most competent judges, when persons' reputation lies at stake in criminal cases, because they are presumed to know somewhat considerable of persons and cases of their own knowledge; and so more capable of giving a just verdict. So in the case, what do those persons know of our learned youth who make up the association? Our candidates appear on a certain day as blazing stars once in an age, and are gazed on, and then they vanish. Now what judgment can be made on a man's con-

versation by such a transient view? unless they must be handled in this consistory as persons that have been bound to the peace, and in open court are to be delivered from their recognizance by three outcries?

(3) Suppose the whole stock of ministerial qualifications must be inquired into, and judgment must pass by the direction of the apostolic law. (1 Tim. 3:2. Tit. 1:6, 9.) Let them be blameless, sober, apt to teach, etc., and add what more you please, which the Scripture mentions, to fill up the character of an evangelical minister, to complete him in all his gifts and graces, either in his beginnings or in his riper state; and it is most apparent that our particular pastors and churches, with the learning, experience, grace, wisdom, and discretion they are owners of, can make a more upright, judicious, and solid trial, and give better account of our candidates from their frequent converse with them, and their occasional and repeated preaching amongst them than the wisest association in the world can do; and it is easier dissembling with the latter than the former, unless the association will take them home and both winter and summer them.

Now, then, considering that their degrees with the express testimony of the college (when particularly desired) are sufficient testimonials of their learning; and the experience of their other good gifts and ministerial qualifications, obtained by converse and their occasional preaching, has been the chief test and trial for our candidates; and by these methods they have been approbated in order to settlement in office-trust; and this has been the custom of the country and churches for near fourscore years. Wherefore

to conclude this argument, I make this proclamation, That if any person or persons disaffected with our old settlements and way in church conduct, will produce one example led into the public ministry by this practice, which has justly offended him, and he will or can evince this to be the blamable cause, we will then surrender the custom to your mercy.

Secondly. I shall now implead the proposal on a just prejudice or presumption of corruption in the clergy, though we are in charity for the present, yet in this way proposed, we have no assurance for the future against the corruptness of such societies; and let any sober man observe, and he will find abundance of poor tools under the mark of the office, where these measures and such like are in force and form. How oft is it repeated that poor, sordid, debauched wretches are put into holy orders, when as they were fitter to be put into the stocks or sent to bridewell for madmen, than to be sent with their testimonials, to work in Christ's vineyard? How long have the Indies, the seas, the provinces, and many other parts of the empire groaned under this damnable way of cheating God of his glory, and the world of salvation?

Simony we know began almost as early as the Christian church, and has prevailed amongst clergymen to a prodigy. The sacred things of God's house have been a trade and merchandise which has beggared churches, and filled the clergy in some kingdoms with a sacrilegious and exorbitant pile of wealth, and the world with a flood of debauchees; and this proposal puts us into the way to open the shop windows again, and expose the same wares to

sale upon a little indulgence in our country; for who can render a reason that the same opportunities, the same temptations, the same corruptions, the same nature, and the same power, would not produce the same effects? or that the same climate, seed, ground, and manner of culture, should not yield the same grain at harvest?

And what have we in pledge for our security, more than the fallacy and fickleness of human nature, when the power is delivered out of our hands?

Obj. You may object, that our candidates, through their own ambition, and the indulgence of particular pastors, thrust themselves into the work too young, and this our way will prescribe due boundaries to them?

Answ. 1. In general, Paul solves a worse case, than can be found (pick whilst you are weary for an example to quadrate with the objection, and render it forcible) amongst all our learned youth, who have hitherto ventured upon the ministry. (Phil. 1: 18.) What then? etc., as though he should say, "What's that to you sir?" if Christ be preached, all is well. And as to our case, we may say, Despise not the day of small things, all men must have a beginning, and every bird which is pretty well fledged must begin to fly. And ours are not of the nest where Icarus was hatched, whose feathers were only glued on; but these belong to the angelic host, and their wings grow out from their essence; therefore you may allow them, with the lark, now and then to dart heavenward, though the shell or down be scarce off from their heads. And so we conclude with our charitable and divine apostle. "What then! if

Christ be preached, whether in pretence, or in truth, either by old or by young, yet therein we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, etc.," to see our own Nazarites, so forward and well-disposed, it shall add to our joy, and noways increase our honor, unless our ambition should surprise us with fear, that such young stars should outshine us.

2. In particular, where will you fix the *quando*, and settle the precise era, or period of time, for their beginning?

(1) There is no college or statute law yet enacted, to decide this question: then of necessity you must do homage to long and laudable custom, as to a superior authority, and honorable ruler; and where that fixes the time, you must submit; for custom, when full of days, and of noble examples, becomes the common law of a nation; and is as sovereign and pleadable, as the dictates of a parliamentary power; at least it shelters from rebukes and calumny: that for any gentleman to affront, talk high and frown at the early zeal and beginnings of our candidates, is but too much in imitation of the Great Mogul of India, who after he hath dined, orders his trumpets to be blown, to signify to the princes of the earth, that they have liberty now to go to dinner; and when he hath finished his formalities, if they please, they may veil their royal bonnets, and thank him for nothing; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression."

(2) Under the gospel, we have no precise time, though there was under the law, when to begin and enter into the ministry, the gospel knows no bar from time, where persons are otherways meetly qualified.

Days and qualifications, are divers things, and the latter are the essentials of a minister of Christ. It is not, how old, but how capable a person is, which is the main point to be inquired after here. Therefore where (in some good measure) there is an honest life, a gracious heart, an orthodox head, and a learned tongue, there is no reason to send such youths to Jericho, with David's messengers (though their beards are not yet grown), to wait upon time and nature, for such an accomplishment; for certainly those recited are the principal in the argument. It is a story in the history of Persia, "That when the Grecians sent some very young noblemen upon an embassage to that court, the Persians reflected upon the Grecian republic, for sending beardless boys on so grave a message to so mighty a monarch." To which the young Grecians very smartly answered, "That if state policy did consist in beards, then he-goats would do for embassadors, as well or better than men." I must confess, I am somewhat of their mind; and therefore I think it is not, how long men have lived, but how wise they are grown: God hath ordained praise out of the mouths of babes. Jeremiah pleads, he was a child, but that cannot null his commission for the ministry, Jer. 1: 6. Paul guards the ministry of young Timothy, by heaven's authority, to defend him from censure, for audaciousness. What! for a child to teach old men their duty! Hold! says Paul, 1 Tim. 4: 12, "Let no man despise thy youth." What, shall not our Lord illustrate his grace and power in what examples he pleases? Has he not formed all the powers of nature? and does he not furnish them with their distinct virtues, etc.

Obj. But you may say, days are full of wisdom, and youth of ignorance in the great affairs of salvation.

Answ. Not always and universally so; as in the examples just now recited, and in many others that may be named, called in at the third and sixth hour, Matt. xx. But, however, if our candidates must never begin till they are without ignorance, or not till they have gained all points (*ad unguem*) in the vast studies of divinity, then it may be said of all our ministers, as Queen Elizabeth was wont to say of bishops, when she visited the schools (study hard children, study hard, for) bishops are old men. So, of necessity, all our ministers must be very old men. But I think that is more agreeable with our necessity and state, both in nature and grace, which one of the ancients was wont to say of himself, namely, that whilst he studied to teach other men, he learned himself. That considering theology, as well as art, is a long study, and life is very short, why may they not begin young? And also, considering that our churches are noways over cluttered with candidates, there is no need to serve them as Christ did the money-changers, who, with a whip of small cords, drove them out of the temple; and especially they having hitherto acquitted themselves in the main as men that need not be ashamed, and yet never any one of them, to this day, has been represented as learned or virtuous, or any way supported by these testimonials.

SECTION V.

That they together be consulted by bereaved churches, to recommend to them such persons as may be fit to be employed amongst them, for present supply, from whom they may in due time proceed to choose a pastor.

Answ. According to my apprehension, this proposal insults very daringly over the churches in two things.

1. By engrossing the right of jurisdiction, not only over the visible freedom and liberties, but conjugal and secret powers of Christ's virgin and widow churches. That it seems to me very advisable (if this proposal may stand for a sound precept) that forthwith another office be erected, and put into the hands and under the government of a few men, exactly skilled in physiognomy, and deeply studied in the sympathies and antipathies of human nature, with an absolute superintending power to control and direct all wooers in their choice for the marriage bed; for that there is many a fond lover who has betrayed the glory of wedlock, by making an unwise and unfortunate choice; and why may not particular beds be overruled, as well as particular churches? both being for the good and service of mankind, and for that both parties, husband and wife, pastor and church, by our sort of government, are bound for term of life, or so long as both shall live. Indeed, were our constitution in church order under the superintendency of a patron, or a lord bishop, who can send (*pro tempore*) a curate, etc., and then recall

him, and place another in his stead, the project might be very advisable; but seeing these churches are settled congregational, and by their principles, the ordination is, as it were, the nuptials, or marriage day of two lovers, that nothing but death, or a bill of divorce (for betraying the glory of the union) can part; it is then good and reasonable, that they be left to choose as they best affect, and not forcibly be tied up to a kind of Hobson's choice, one of these or none. This apparently puts too hard upon the churches' liberties, and overthrows the government; for that our platform, in Chap. II., treating of the nature of the churches, asserts, sect. 5, that the state of the visible church since the coming of Christ, is only congregational; therefore neither national, provincial, nor classical; then what does this proposal do here?

Also, our platform asserts the free electing power of the churches, Chap. V. In these words, ordinary church power is that of privilege, such as belong to the brotherhood, whereby they design persons unto office. So also in Chap. X. In these words, the power granted by Christ unto the body of the church and brotherhood is a prerogative or privilege which the church doth exercise in the admission of her own members, and in choosing their own officers. Now if Christ has given these high powers and authorities to his churches, he has certainly furnished them with skill and wisdom to manage them.

So we come to the second part of the affront in this proposal, and that is,

2. By its making a plain presumption of incapacity in the churches of doing their own proper

work without their grace's help. It is as much as to say, Alas! alas! It is well known that the churches are generally a sort of plain men, little skilled in deep matters; that there is apparent danger, if left in their elections to their own conduct, of introducing very illiterate persons and doleful creatures, to preach in the temple of God as officers there. Now this is much agreeing with the old arguments against the laity, who were described by the learned to be without the knowledge of the original languages, and other parts of polite learning, and so noways fit to interpret Scripture; therefore, it is very rationally enacted, that the Bible be taken from them, least they should study heresy and not holiness out of that divine book. But to pass by all such pleas, I shall come to the main point in plain terms, and that is this, our platform is our settlement, and it has secured to the churches these prerogatives, and they are part of their entailed inheritance; and it is a vain thing to pretend to plead the incapacity of right owners and rich proprietors, especially whilst there is a competent set of senses left them. Indeed, when any gentleman can show any precept, and produce a commission for the taking into their hands the estate of idiot-churches, they may then cite their intellectuals to a proper bar, and verdict going against any particular example, they then, *ipso facto*, become guardians, and may enter into their worship. But in the mean time, as to our own churches, and the whole constellations of them, and every individual or particular church amongst them remains *compos mentis*, and therefore must not be intrigued by such offers as these are.

But yet before I close this argument, I shall a little further humor the presumption of insufficiency here laid down; and therefore I shall desire, that a survey be made of the state of the churches, and if their free election be found for this thirty years last past (and we will go no higher), have by the major part of voices introduced insufficient officers, then let the platform be annulled and the proposal stand as a more valid canon. And in this inquiry we would know, whether the dictators will give leave (in drawing up the catalogue of defective elections), that they themselves be put on the back of the title-page, and there stand as the errata of our old government? Or whether they themselves are the only exceptions?

But suppose, when we have accomplished our search, we find their own and all other elections for the main have hit right; and if so, then whether we ought not to pay a veneration to the practice, as having more of Christ in it than we can in the rufflings of ambition presently find out or perceive? And whether after such long experience and good success, it may not be our wisdom to keep this *via trita*, which we have found to be *via tuta*, that is to say, keep the good old way of our blessed predecessors, lest going into a new and untrodden path, we fall into some ambuscade, and come off with broken bones and ruined churches?

> Quicquid præcipiti via.
> Certum deserit ordinem
> Lætos non habit exitus. BOETIUS.

> Rashly to leave the plain and good old way
> Turns into mournful night, a joyful day.

SECTION VI.

That hereunto may be referred the direction of proceeding in any of their particular churches, about the convening of the councils, that shall be thought necessary for the welfare of the churches.

Answer. Query, who must give the direction, and judge what councils are necessary for the welfare of the churches?

Answer. The association.

Reply. I thought as much; for the sole and whole power is, by these proposals, resigned to them as their indisputable and undoubted right, insomuch that their *beneplacita*, the *elicit* and free resolves of their will, shall and must be the absolute and uncontrollable rule of conduct; that is to say, the churches are to be in vassalage, and the association is to rule all by prerogative; so that forever henceforward, we may inscribe across the door of the conclave (to notify the rule of the house) that imperial law,

> Sic volo, sit jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.
>
> We will and doom, none now can us withstand;
> Our will is reason; for the churches in the land.

Indeed, when great men turn beggars for small booties, with the famous General Baziliareous, it signifies the ebb of fortune runs low with them; but when they ask an ancient inheritance upon gift, it signifies either the donor to be in a languishing posture, and that his estate is like to escheat (to revert) to the crown, through failure of natural heirs, or else great boldness in the beggars. But what should be

the meaning of this demand who can divine? I hope they do not reckon the churches to be making their last will, and design them for their heirs.

The churches in New England are fairly possessed of this high prerogative, namely, of convening councils necessary for their own well being; they are also as likely to continue as they were forty years ago, unless their own pastors should betray them. And they are also as capable of managing all instruments devolved upon them by Christ, as they were in the days of their youth. Then what can we make of this contrivement, namely, when the churches shall have occasion to seek relief by council (as sometimes the emperor has been confined at the insolent threshold of his holiness, and upon his coming forth in his infallibility, this pile of temporal glory has been his horseblock, and so here) they must humbly wait at the door of the association till they shall be informed. When, what, who, and where they shall have one. But not to interrupt the world with long stories, we must again here demur upon title.

Section. That the several associations in the country maintain a due correspondence with one another.

Answer. If the Platonic notion concerning the universal soul of the world or spirit of nature (whereby one body is affected by the operations of another at some considerable distance), were established for an infallible theorem, and these societies could circulate their intelligence by the power and echoes of his mighty essence, the design might then be practicable; or had we in all corners of our country doves trained up to carry mails or packets of letters from country to country, there might be some hopes for

supporting this mighty correspondence; but to do it wholly by human means, the charge plainly threatens to eat out the profit.

But we may suppose the seat of these things shall be universally settled, fully abutting upon the post-road, and what a mighty business is a sixpenny or fourpenny letter in such a good cause? Nay, indeed that is no great matter in itself, yet these sixpennys or fourpennys are like the sand on the sea-shore, a great many of them put together grow very heavy, especially where wife and children are to be maintained upon 70 or £80 income per annum.

Wise men may do as they please, yet for my part I can see no good policy in the proposal, unless you can court some rich potentate to espouse the cause, and sacrifice annually some part of his royal revenue to support the phantasy.

Section. So that the state of religion may be the better known and secured in all the churches?

Answer. Religion in its infallible original, the wisdom and authority of God! In its infinite object, the ineffable persons and perfections of the divine essence; in its means, the gospel of salvation; in its inspired, wakeful, and capacious ministry; in its subject, the inestimable immortal soul of man; in its transcendent effects. (1) In time, the charming peace and joys of conscience. (2) In eternity, the joyful retreat and shouts of glory, is the most incomparable gift of Paladium, which ever came from heaven; amongst all the favors of the father of lights there is none parallel with this; when disclosed in its beauty it ravisheth all the intellects of the universe, and challenge may be made, that the preroga-

tives and glory belonging to all the crowned heads in the world, do bow and wait upon its processions through the earth, to guard it from its innumerable and inveterate enemies. Yet in paying our veneration and attendance we must distinguish right, and place every thing properly, and the means must be proportionate with the end and agreeable in their natures; or otherwise whilst we go about to accomplish a good end, namely, the security of religion by improper means, we may lose our attempt and have no thanks but be blamed for our pains, for we must not do evil that good may come.

It is certain that the church of Christ is the pillar of truth, or sacred recluse and peculiar asylum of religion, and this sacred guest, religion, which came in the world's infancy from heaven to gratify the solitudes of miserable man when God had left him, hath long kept house with us in this land, to sweeten our wilderness state, and the renowned churches here are her sacred palaces. Then certainly it is not fair for her lovers, under pretence of maintaining her welcome in greater state, to desolate her pleasing habitations, though they stand somewhat low like the myrtle grove, Zech. 1: 8, etc.

Section. And particularly it is thought necessary to the well-being of these churches, that all the associations in the country meet together, by their respective delegates, once in a year.

Answ. This is a great thesis, and whoever was the father, the womb of it is very fertile, and big with articles of moment; it comprehends a large territory, and a great treasure, we must therefore survey it by cousinography, and then nextly by the laws of the church stock.

1. The country contained in this proposal, by a just consequence, and from the nature of the design, must extend so far as we can find any gospel churches planted or to be planted within the English dominion on the firm land or continent of America; there is no restriction made to exclude any, and charity is a grace that would have every one virtuous, and equally privileged with means for that end; so that we may begin our lines of latitude in the south, somewhat northward of the capes of Florida, and then extend them to the north to some parts of Nova Scotia, if not to the bay of St. Lawrence, and from those points on to the Atlantic; we must stretch our lines over-thwart, keeping equal longitudes, till we meet with other princes' dominions.

Now this is a noble territory, enough for an empire, and all English; and why may we not be thus extensive for the good of the churches therein planted? Other countries have sent their delegates near as far as this comes to, namely, upon the conventions of his holiness. But the mischief is, the revenue will not hold out. But I have thought of one way, and that will do if we can but obtain, though I acknowledge it is somewhat chimerical or whimsical; yet though it be, the proposal has no reason to repine or find fault, for that it is its near kinsman.

The project is this, namely: Upon the great settlements which we hope for between the two crowns, I advise that petitions be made (if the articles of settlement will allow it) that either the rents of Toledo, or some good stout gold mine in Peru, be reserved wholly to the use of this design, and if you are pleased to keep or settle within narrower limits

(when we know your territory), we can, by rules of proportion and subtraction, compute the charge, and if there be any overplus when your own charges are defrayed, the rest may be assigned to the next province for such good uses. But, however, let the petitions go forward, for you will have want enough of your share; for I am sure your present supplies are not full enough for your daily bread, and these contingent and unexpected charges, especially seeing they were never thought of, or provided for, in your first settlements.

SECTION VII.

And finally, that ministers disposed to associate endeavor, in the most efficacious manner they can, to prevail with such ministers as unreasonably neglect such meetings with their brethren in their proper associations, that they would not expose themselves to the inconveniences that such neglects cannot but be attended withal.

Answer. This proposal seems to be founded upon the Epicurean doctrine of atoms; for by the scheme which atheistical atomists give concerning the beginning of the world, by their account it was after this lucky manner, that is to say, there was before time a vast pile of incoherent atoms, which globically hung sleeping upon a centre-atom, without the least grain of sense, through the vast eternity, a *parte ante;* but at last, and nobody can tell how, they were inclined to throw off their present posture, but being neither

of one form, inclination, nor propension, quickly great heaving and shuffling (from various sympathies and antipathies) began to be amongst them, that a chaos is presently rolled together, and in a little time this magnificent and curious world which you look upon came out of the horrid womb of this distracted heap of atoms, and that without any help from a creating power, but by a wonderful good chance. Thus far you have the doctrine of atoms, which I could not well avoid, because of so much noble matter preëxisting, and represented in various shapes and forms, with a sound of motion, and various sympathies and antipathies appearing and represented by the proposal, but yet can hear of no superintending fiat, or any creating voice to overrule or say, "Let it be." But only if persons are disposed, or indisposed, the business must be managed as wisely as you can; and if it should so chance that some fine thing (never before seen in the country) should be made out of these materials, without the help of a creating power, the world would be a great debtor to the accident; and the churches, may they not be justly stripped of their being to make room for it, and maintain it?

But to be more distinct and somewhat more close in my answer, I must remind you that our blessed Lord commands us to pray, Matt. vi., "Our father which art in heaven," etc.; "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And if sincere, he hath promised to stablish us, and keep us from evil, 2 Thess. 3: 3. From these divine principles, the question is, whether those pastors are the stable or unstable, the reasonable or unreasonable men, namely, either those who have promoted this design in

the country, or those who have withstood it? And also where has temptation prevailed most? And to put this debate under a brighter light, I will make bold to recite a brief history of this matter, till we bring you to the nativity of these proposals, and to the day wherein they were born, with some present improvement of the history.

About thirty years ago, more or less, there was no appearance of the associations of pastors in these colonies, and in some parts and places there is none yet. But after the country had suffered much in the slaughters and depredations committed by the heathen, and by many other afflictions, the neighboring ministers in some counties met to pray together, etc., and for no other intent that I ever knew or heard of. But after they had continued their meetings for some years, and others, following the example, began to converse together and communicate cases, as best suited each person; and at last, perceiving they were almost gotten into a classical form before they thought of it, they began to give their meetings the specious titles of classes, associations, and ecclesiastical conventions, etc., as securely as though these titles were a fruit growing out of our own constitution, and by degrees began to dream that they were really, and *de jure*, what their new titles and late custom had made them only *de facto*, and time increased their inclinations and purposes to compass a more formal and complete settlement. It is certain their opportunities were considerable, the keys of the church treasure being put into their hands. The more the main point is studied, the more glory appears to feed men's ambition, like the impression by the eye on our great

parents in paradise, Gen. 3: 8. The tree was pleasant to the eyes, a tree to be desired. Alas! alas! empire and supreme rule is a glorious thing! *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbus*, is a very royal business. Now this conceit did begin pretty much to predominate, especially in some gentlemen that were inclined to presbyterian principles, men of worth and learning, who, improving their advantages of sense and influence to intrigue others of a lower set of intellectuals, etc., brought the business so near to a conclusion as you find it in the last recited proposal, wherein you have the main of this history contained, like Homer's Iliad, in a nut-shell. But to make short, and conclude my story. When they had thus far advanced and ripened their design, out comes these proposals, like Aaron's golden calf, the fifth day of November, 1705.

Thus you have a short account how things have been carried on relating to associations; and having a convenient crisis, I shall improve the history, to promote my present design, in a few particulars.

1. By considering the present duty of our erring pastors.

2. The justice to be done on these proposals.

3. Make some small astrological remarks relating to the date, which the clew of our history has brought us to.

(1) As to the duty of such as are involved in the charge, whether or no (upon a presumption that this history be true) they ought not to cease exciting others to wander from their proper post, and they themselves (if not by the open acts of the churches' authority, yet) by the good government of their own

wisdom, prudence, and grace, be remanded within their proper boundaries, and there continue as stars within their own orbs, to influence and act, *tam in modis quam in statis, quo prius*, according to the former usage, and the nature of their trust, and no more go beyond their own line. (2 Cor. 10: 16.)

(2) Whether these proposals here offered to view, be not like Aaron's golden calf? And whether they ought not to be served as Moses dealt with that (Exod. 32: 20.), when he took it and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder; for that it is very evident, that though it be but a calf now, yet in time it may grow (being of a thrifty nature) to become a sturdy ox that will know no whoa, and it may be past the church's skill then to subdue it.

For if I am not much mistaken (and Pareus too) that great and terrible beast with seven heads and ten horns, described in Revelations xiii., was nothing else a few ages ago but just such another calf as this is. It was, indeed, finely shaped and of neat limbs, when it was first calved, insomuch that the great potentates of the earth were much ravished with its aspect and features; some offered to suckle it on the choicest cows amongst all the herds of royal cattle (that it might be large), hoping to stock their own countries with the breed, and when it was grown to a considerable magnitude, to render it more shapely and fair, they put iron tips on its horns, and beset its stupendous bulk with very rich ornaments, that they might make it the more awing to all beholders, and, if possible, by such artifices to add to the natural pride and choler of the creature.

But alas, poor men! they have paid dear for their

prodigality and fondness; for this very creature that was but a calf when they first began to feed it, is now grown to be such a mad, furious, and wild bull, that there is scarce a Christian monarch on earth, unless the great Anne, their Swedish and Prussian majesties, and their high mightinesses, with this exception, there is scarce a potentate in the world, the best horseman or huntsman of them all, that dare take this beast by the horns when he begins to bounce and bellow. Indeed, the emperor within these few years has recovered so much courage, that he took him by the tail, to drive him out of his royal granges, being quite angry and weary with his cropping and brousing on the flowers of his imperial crown. But otherwise the beast generally goes at large and does what he will in all princes' dominions, and keeps them in awe. Therefore, to conclude, and infer, *obsta principiis!* It is wisdom to nip such growths in the bud, and keep down by early slaughter such a breed of cattle. *Nam omne malum nascens facile opprimitur.*

(3) In all the astrological remarks I have made, I find its nativity full of favorable aspects to English churches. The fifth day of November has been as a guardian angel to the most sacred interest of the empire. It has rescued the whole glory of church and state, from the most fatal arrest of hell and Rome. That had I been of the cabal, or combination, which formed these proposals, so soon as I had seen and perceived the date (as I imagine), my heart with king David's, would have smote me, and I should have cried out, *Miserere nostri Deus,* — the good Lord have mercy upon us. This is the gunpowder-

treason day, and we are every man ruined, being running Faux's fate! Why, gentlemen! have you forgot it? It is the day of the gunpowder-treason, and a fatal day to traitors.

Our measures certainly intend the blowing up the churches, as Faux's did the parliament; that for my own part, I have such an awe upon my mind of this very day, that I have made a settled resolution, that of all the days of the whole year, I will never conspire treason against my natural prince, nor mischief to the churches on the fifth day of November.

And so farewell, gentlemen, for I dare not join with you in this conspiracy.

PART II.

SECTION I.

THAT these associated pastors with a proper number of delegates from their several churches, be formed into a standing and stated council, which shall consult, advise, and determine all affairs that shall be proper matter for the consideration of an ecclesiastical council within their respective limits, except always the cases are such as the associated pastors judge more convenient to fall under the cognizance of other council.

Answer. Seeing it is the first time we have in these proposals heard of a standing council for these churches, and though the whole doctrine of it is not

precisely or in terms contained in this section, yet that we may pass over what remains more briefly, when I come upon each following section, I will, therefore, make a stop here, and discourse this subject in its several distinct branches, and make but one work of it; and I shall thus methodize the business.

1. I shall observe the seeming favor to the lay delegates here offered to them in this proposal.

2. Survey the nature of the council.

3. Inquire into its original.

4. Take an account of the work which is assigned it.

5. View the time appointed, certain and uncertain.

6. Inquire for the place where it is to meet.

7. And lastly, discourse its maintenance.

1. We must observe the seeming favor the lay delegates or fraternity of the churches are treated with in this proposal; for at the first tender, they seem very honorable to be invited into the association, as though they were to be established members of this council; and were to be equal sharers in the authority and government in it; yet do but mind the connection of both parts of the proposition, and you will find there is nothing of this nature intended for them. But only by a specious show, they are invited to establish the associations on their tottering basis, and that is soon done, if all parties are agreed; and from the fraternity, there is no need of any more formalities, than paying homage to their authority by this act of submission and obedience here proposed;

and so soon as this is done, you shall find the fraternity very fairly released at the door of the sessions, every man repairing to his own home. It is an observation, on the monarchy of bees, that the drones formerly supposed to be not only a lumpish, but a useless bee, yet it is of that nature, and so essential a member of that commonwealth, that it is really the male bee, and does impregnate the females, who are the sole laborers in that kingdom, but when that crisis is over, the poor drones are by common consent banished, as a great incumberment. So in our case, alas! what can be expected when the lay delegates have done the former job, but that they shall be laid by, for their wisdom and capacity is noways admired in these proposals. And it has always been found that the laity are a clog to clergymen when they begin to soar aloft, or above their former sphere; and if you will but view the proposal again, in the hindermost part of it you will see a back door very artificially finished and left upon latch, for their execution; for though they are called to be members of the council in the first part of the proposal, yet by exception made in the last part, they are to sit upon no case but what the associates please; and seeing it is at their disposal, you may rationally and forcibly conclude, that those who have made it their business to unpin the whole tabernacle, and have but this chore to do, and then all is their own, will now finish their work with a wet finger, upon the aforesaid compliance. For you must note that after they have admitted the brethren and viewed the certificates of election from the several churches, containing some congratulatory compliments, to honor the new con-

stitution and government, as is usual in all states, and having also treated the delegates with the civilities of the house, and also with a long and tedious harangue of the mighty blessing these new settlements plainly predict and promise the country, etc., the delegates are then advised, there is no case at present depending fit for their cognizance, but what are upon file, the associates have already considered about it, and referred to some other council best known to their graces. And so, good brethren, you are now with many thanks for your obedient attendance, released till latter *lammas*, or till the Greek *calands* come about.

And here we may dig a grave to bury all our ancient privileges in, and hang our harps upon the willows, and when we are thus wasted, should you call us in once more to sing one of the songs of Zion, all our notes must be *elegie et de tristibus*, yet the broken accents and lowly murmurs of our sorrow will serve for elahs and sweet diapasons, in your conquering song of triumph.

2. We must next survey the nature of the council, which cannot be sooner, and with better advantage (to represent the true idea of it to every man's understanding) than in a brief definition, thus, the council is to be standing and stated, to meet once in the year at the least, and at other times as each association shall please to determine, to inquire into the condition of the churches, and advise such things as may be for the advantage of our holy religion. Thus you have the nature of it laid out in terms very concisely.

But if a longer description, according to the genu-

ine sense of expressions in the proposals, will better suit you, and give a better impression of its nature upon your thoughts, we may then describe it thus:

It is a council of human invention, stated and settled to convene once in the year, yearly, during the revolution of the heavenly bodies, and at other certain times of the year, so as to keep its course parallel with our high and superior sessions of the peace, if the creators please; and to consult, advise, and determine all affairs within the reach of ecclesiastical councils, and especially, etc.

And thus, we being a people swimming in such plenty, that all our chargeable measures, both domestic in our private families and public in church and commonwealth, being not near sufficient to take off our waste and superfluous streams, and our riches and stores so plainly overloading us, we have here formed a creature that will help to sup up all, and feeding upon our full baskets, we shall find, that the further we go with Æsop's load the lighter we shall grow; then who will not admire the wisdom of the invention?

3. Our next task is to examine the original of this council, which inquiry may be resolved into this disjunct proposition, namely, this council in the result of the will, obeying the understanding in its last dictates, erring or not erring.

The question being thus stated, it is at every man's liberty to take the part in the disjunction which best likes him. I suppose the proposal arrested and brought to trial will plead not erring, or not guilty, as is usual with all criminals when indicted; and therefore, seeing you expect to be cleared by the jury,

you must give us an honest account who set you on work, and what rule you were guided by to assure us that your intellectual powers were free from error in forming this council, and we will give you room enough in your own defence. For,

(1) If you can produce evidence from the canon of Scripture in express terms, or by sound consequence, and prove New England churches are obliged to form a standing and stated council, or that you are to do it for them, etc., we will submit. But no such canon can be found. The proposals then incur a heavy premunire for making so bold with a settled government, and no text to warrant the attempt.

(2) Is it by any authority, derived from the civil government of the country, by law or practice, that this council is here erected?

1st. By law, if there be any such law, you have liberty to plead it in your own defence.

2d. By practice, has the civil government ever set such an example? Have they ever entrenched upon the privileges of the churches in the least degree? And in their own orb, are they not more exemplary? Do not all men keep to commission? Are they not curious in maintaining all settled forms, as the limits and boundaries of all men's actions and interests? Nay, is not the exalted head of this body politic in his whole ministry, careful to steer all his actions by his commission, and the precept of law? Is not the least error (though made by jealousy, and not found in reality) that looks but like an arbitrary action presently drawn into complaint, as a great grievance and common nuisance? If it be but in dream that the exchequer appears touched, without a precept, or

the wings of our civil liberties clipped, or so much as a feather be plucked from them, is not the country here and the court at home filled with complaints? What means all this? And yet must these churches, formed by principles of piety and honor, and under the steerage of a wise and just government, bear whole cart-loads of injuries, and have all their liberties violated? And at last have a stated anti-christian arbitrary council, that can cut their throats for all the wise regulation that is in it, be thrust in upon them and both Scripture and the wise fathers of the commonwealth, no patrons to it? And what, must we swallow all this? This must needs be a very heavy meal to digest?

> Ut opes et lamentabile regnum — eruerint?
>
> They spoil our kingdom, and our courage dash,
> They take our wealth, and leave us nought but trash.

3d. Is there any certificate, order, or vote, from the churches, as the womb of this council? If there be, the proposals shall then pass for the innocent midwife, and no harm shall come. But, alas! If we search all church records, the pursuit is blank. Therefore it must stand for a daring intrusion upon the churches' power of privilege.

It is and will be acknowledged, with great justice and satisfaction, that the pastors of the churches are in a high station, as they represent the great shepherd, and their trust is noble and great. They are rulers, and to conduct all transactions, etc., but yet must never infringe the churches' power of privilege in any branch of it? It becomes the holiness, wisdom, and honor of the ruling officers at a crisis when

the churches are in exercise of this power, not to allow themselves to dictate too imperiously. They must never, indeed, in all their ministration, talk with such an elevated language as in the third section of the second part, in these words, namely, that each church choose and depute one or more (private members) to attend their pastor in their stated session, etc., as though the high commission court was returned from exile and now opened, and some of your graces were to be lord chancellor. This plainly carrieth too high a crest. What! to consider yourselves as a distinct estate from the churches, and to send out of your higher house your orders to be obeyed in the lower house, etc.? But, I say, this is not right, for in concerning and calling of councils the churches are your superiors; and upon a severe interpretation of their canons, they may, if they please, leave you at home. For though you have been elected once into office, yet in the exercise of this their power, you stand but competitors with other principal persons, for their choice and election, to determine you members of an ecclesiastical council. Possibly this doctrine may seem to be but a very crude dose. But yet I assure you, it is approbated by a college of very able and learned physicians; and I hand it to you as I find it made up in the churches' chest of medicines, Platform, chap. 16, sect. 2. The efficient cause of ecclesiastical councils, or synodical assemblies, next under Christ, is the power of the churches sending forth their elders and other messengers, etc., sect. 3; magistrates have power to call a synod, by calling to the churches to send forth their elders and messengers, etc., for the

constituting of a synod is a church act, sect. 6; because none are or should be more fit to know the state of the churches, nor to advise of ways, etc. Therefore it is fit, that in the choice of the messengers for such assemblies, they have special respect unto such, namely, elders. That certainly if you expect your council shall escape condemnation, you must then produce the *probatum est* of the churches, or else it perishes under this trial.

4. Can you show any patent for the imperial chamber of our mighty monarch, to take into your hands (that you may new model) these churches (the royal demesnes of Christ Jesus, the prince of peace) as an escheat to the crown? Or have you commission with instructions from thence to erect within the province, such costly and formidable assemblies as are here projected? Nay, if you can find or pick up amongst the old statutes, that are not quite worn out, or produce one venerable precept or example throughout the whole English empire, for the government of church or state therein; we will state your case, and grant you one imparlance (with due time) if you can make any reasonable presumption, it may be had for your justification; and in the mean time, I shall venture to recite a few principles of the English government, that are like the *vena cava*, or great arteries in nature, which circulate the blood and spirits through the imperial body; and if they do not all with a joint voice (like a jury in their return, where no man dissents), condemn your council and whole scheme, you shall still have a jail delivery and be set free.

Principle I. There is no one of the three estates of

the empire can make a valid act to bind the subject, or institute any new forms of government.

It is certain the Parliament, that supreme court, by an united voice, is very transcendent; it makes null, enacts, and abrogates all laws, statutes, and ordinances concerning matters ecclesiastical, civil, martial, maritime, etc. Therefore all acts, institutions, creations of trust, corporations, and offices, either originally and immediately, or by a fair consequence, derive from this fountain the imperial crown, enriched with many prerogatives, and adorned with many ample flowers; they were there planted by the creating power of the nation, and no English monarch can at pleasure enlarge that garden with a new species. That to meet with such things as these now under debate within an English province, etc.

Query. Whether they are enacted by single men, or small factions, or by the united voice of the kingdom? If not by the latter, they must die traitors to the empire, as transgressing against the essentials of its constitution, and liberty of conscience is no city of refuge here.

Principle II. All Englishmen are privileged by and strictly bound to the law; that is the fruitful reason of all good, and rule of duty. To be bound to the peace, or the good behavior, is to be bound to the law, that is every man's master and guide.

Query. Whether these proposals, and this council, have not put a slight upon this dominion?

Principle III. The vengeance or vindictive justice of the nation flames (in the sanction of the law) against all transgressors.

Every one that breaks the law breaks from the rule

of his duty and trust, and in a degree violates the power of the nation, and usurps the whole legislation; therefore, in the execution of these direful sanctions and penalties affixed to the statutes, the omnipotent power of the nation revenges the glory of its own independence and unaccountableness upon its insolent subjects, according to that, Gen. 2: 17, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Therefore I may say to this council, *memento mori.*

Principle IV. Every great person is under the awe of the law, either as directive or coercive.

It is the saying of those who are skilled in the law, that *reg in regno suo, superiores habet,* DEUM *et* LEGEM; the king has in his realm two superiors, God and the Law, though he is only under the directive; but all his great subjects are under the coercive power of it. The nobles and great ministers in church and state look upon the law as the watchful eye of some direful numen. The superior clergymen, the great bishops of the kingdom, though they appear masters of such prerogatives, yet they have nothing but what they derive from the law; and the laws are their boundaries, saying, "Hitherto ye shall go, and no further at your peril." That those great men might as well have undertaken with Archimides, to have removed the earthly globe (upon condition) as to have done such a thing as this. What! to alter the constitution of church government, which is established by the statute and canon law of church and nation? This is to blow up the kingdom. Ergo, put out your matches, and dissolve your trains.

Principle V. All Englishmen live and die by laws of their own making. That they are never pleased with upstart law-makers.

Principle VI. That English government and law is a charter-party settled by mutual compact between persons of all degrees in the nation, and no man must start from it at his peril.

Query. Whether these proposals have kept to the articles of this great covenant?

Principle VII. Englishmen hate an arbitrary power (politically considered) as they hate the devil.

For that they have, through immemorial ages, been the owners of very fair enfranchisements and liberties, that the sense, savor, or high esteem of them are (as it were) *extraduce*, transmitted with the elemental materials of their essence from generation to generation, and so ingenate and mixed with their frame, that no artifice, craft, or force used, can root it out. *Naturam expellas furca licet usque recurrit.* And though many of their incautelous princes have endeavored to null all their charter rights and immunities, and aggrandize themselves in the servile state of the subjects, by setting up their own separate will for the great standard of government over the nations, yet they have all along paid dear for their attempts, both in the ruin of the nation, and in interrupting the increase of their own grandeur and their foreign settlements and conquests.

Had the late reigns, before the accession of the great William and Mary to the throne of England, but taken the measures of them, and her present majesty, in depressing vice and advancing the union and wealth, and encouraging the prowess and bravery of the nation, they might by this time have been capable to have given laws to any monarch on earth; but spending their time in the pursuit of an absolute

monarchy (contrary to the temper of the nation and the ancient constitution or the government) through all the meanders of state craft, it has apparently kept back the glory and damped all the most noble affairs of the nation. And when, under the midwifery of Machiavilian art and cunning of a daring prince, this monster, tyranny and arbitrary government, was at last just born, upon the holding up of a finger, or upon the least signal given, on the whole nation goes upon this hydra.

The very name of an arbitrary government is ready to put an Englishman's blood into a fermentation; but when it really comes and shakes its whip over their ears, and tells them it is their master, it makes them stark mad; and being of a mimical genius, and inclined to follow the court mode, they turn arbitrary too.

That some writers, who have observed the governments and humors of nations, thus distinguish the English.

The emperor (they say) is the king of kings, the king of Spain is the king of men, the king of France the king of asses, and the king of England the king of devils; for that the English nation can never be bridled and ridden by an arbitrary prince. Neither can any chains put on by despotic and arbitrary measures hold these legions. That to conclude this plea, I find not amongst all the catalogues of heroes or worthy things in the English empire, peers to these undertakers; therefore we must needs range them with the arbitrary princes of the earth (such as the great Czar or Ottoman monarch), who have no other rule to govern by but their own will. And therefore,

under this branch of our discourse and their arbitrary measures, I shall venture to annex the following theses, as conclusions fairly deduced from the premises, and leave them to consideration.

Thesis 1. They have out-kinged all kings on earth whose prerogatives are bounded, and their kingdoms governed by law.

Thesis 2. They have out-bishoped all the bishops of Great Britain, whilst they themselves have acted with such lawless liberty, and left the bishops fettered in the statutes.

Thesis 3. They have out-poped the pope himself, who is head of an hierarchy, supported by certain laws, acts, and ordinances, for the maintaining an harmony or union between head and members. So in the next place,

4. We come to survey the work cut out for this council.

Cato, that great and grave philosopher, did commonly demand (when any new project was propounded unto him), *Cui bono?* or what good was like to ensue? Now in this present business, the definition pretends to make a satisfactory answer to such a question, namely, in the employment of this annual council; and that is to inquire into the condition of the churches, and advise such things as may be for the advantage of our holy religion.

It is certain, considering the nature of the creature here formed, there had need be some Herculean labor assigned. Those who are purveyors, and must provide quarters, will find it very chargeable, that it had need do very extraordinary business. As once King James the First said to a big-limbed country fellow who

came to court to be a porter; some that knew him told the king how many bowls full and quarters of mutton he would eat at a meal; says the king to the fellow, "You, sirrah, that eat so much more than other men, if you cannot do so much more work than other men, by my soul (says the king) I'll hang you." So here, there had need go a handsome stock of small cattle, and other expenses, to maintain one sessions; that if it has confidence to meet, and is treated with an ordinary allowance, if it cannot do abundance of work, it will be waste charges and great incumberment.

Now, if this be all that is here proposed (in my opinion) the creators are very defective in their proportions; for though the work mentioned is in itself good work; but it is all done already to their hands, there is nothing of this nature neglected in New England churches; at the least, no means or methods wanted; but as God says, Jer. 5: 4, "What could have been done more for my vineyard, that I have not done in it:" may properly be applied to the churches here, and all for the advantage and good of our holy religion; that, in a word, there is no want in this country, unless it be the want of good and honest hearts; and I suppose you have none of those to bequeathe, Matt. 25: 9. Upon the first view of this stupendous business, I was ready to fancy, whether or no you had dreamed of, or seen King Henry the Eighth coming with his old case and question, which involved the pope, his conclave, and all the academies in Europe, and whether you were getting a mighty casuist ready, to take the king's conscience into consideration? Or, whether

you had news of the old Arian war, its breaking out again, that you should in such haste (without citing other estates for the defence of the kingdom, but only by virtue of your prerogative), run up such a formidable and costly redoubt? But if it be all come to this, and there is no more to do; than what every pious and wise man does every day, every week, and every session, it is even another fit or paroxysm of the mountains bringing forth, as the poet says, *Parturiunt montes*, &c.

But to humor what would seem serious in the proposal, I shall consider both parts of the work distinctly.

The first is, to inquire into the condition of the churches?

Answ. Now whether this precept, so full of sweat and servitude, may not vie it for merit, as equal in pains with any of the great prelates in Europe, in their laborious visitations; who when they come into some capital town in the other part of their diocess, and being treated with the solemn formalities of sumptuous feasts by the nobility and gentry in the neighborhood, and having spent the biggest part of their pastoral visit in glutting themselves with honor and full tables; at last begin the other part of their work, and inquire (possibly) how many parishes in this great town, and whether there be any chirurgeons, physicians, or schoolmasters, that do good to their neighbors without license? Or, whether there be any new Golgothas to be dedicated, for the securer retreat of the dead to that place? Or, whether the parish curates read service well, and observe to time their particular lessons, with the canonical days?

And, especially, whether the bells are kept in good order? All which makes up a noble piece of service, to requite a crown or kingdom for the revenues of a barony! And, whether it may be thought, that our great and yearly council, will come a whit behind the aforesaid ministry in the first or last part of service mentioned? And whether if they do but equal them, we may not be thought to have made a wise settlement? But notwithstanding we shall grant, the proposal makes mention of a Christian duty; for that it becomes all men who bear a love to Christ, to inquire into the state of his churches, both for the manifesting their love to men, and directing their prayers and gratitude to God. Therefore,

(1) As to their outward and temporal state, we may inform ourselves, by virtue of neighborhood, by Christian travellers, and public letters of intelligence: and thus we may rationally, and with very good moral certainty know the state of the churches, both in other countries and our own; and thus good Nehemiah informs himself at Shushan, how it fared with his brethren at Jerusalem, Neh. 1: 2, 3.

(2) As to their moral state (which consists in their profession, faith, manner of worship, discipline and conversation) this is discovered particularly, by their directories, confessions of faith, platforms, rubric, liturgies, and other canonical systems, made public for that end, etc. And considering, that whatever of this nature is necessary for the advance of religion, is well adjusted in this country, it must needs be but a vain repetition, or senseless tautology for a council to meet yearly or quarterly for this end, namely, to inquire what news, or whether New England's con-

fession of faith is the same this year, as it was last? Or whether all the churches, their manner of worship, is this sabbath as it was the other? And as to their conversation (which may seem to lie most out of sight) sufficient provision made by the principles of our wise platform (for upholding the communion of churches) for our inquiry and information here also. And thus we come to the other part of this good work, namely,

2d. To advise such things as may be for the advantage of our holy religion.

Answ. Query, whether or no there be not published weekly from the oracles of God (and that with great soundness and zeal) more truth in a day than all New England can practise in a long time after? And whether all the churches and the whole land are not honored and addressed, from week to week, in such measures by infallible truth, if not by infallible men? Or whether or no these methods do not divulge the whole mind of God to each plantation? Or, whether these gentlemen have any secrets of wisdom, not yet made known? Or whether they intend to serve the churches, as some great philosophers and profound artists in medicine serve the world, namely, such who carry some great inestimable catholicon to the grave with them? And whether they will be thus hard-hearted in religion, as the other are in philosophy, unless we will gratify them with this piece of prodigality here exacted? I must acknowledge I have little patience towards these things, that under such a spacious show and pretence, such a direful catastrophe should be shrouded! I must needs say, it is plainly some of Joab's friendship, when he spake

quietly and peaceably to Abner, smiled in his face, as his friend, but stabbed him to the heart, under the fifth rib, that he dropped and died.

But, however, I shall endeavor, to rescue myself from all impatience, and with deliberation sum up my answer, in an appeal to your own reasons concerning those several created trusts, which God has established, and clothed with his own authority, every one of which is acted with great vigor, and success; and whether you think you can do more than all these for religion? Or prescribe something new which they never thought of. As

First. Civil authority, in two great branches.

(1) Legislative power (that civil omnipotence) is doing very great things for religion, by their proclamations, and all penal laws enacted for the crushing of immorality and vice, and all their wise and exact precepts for the support of justice and piety. They are opening many civil channels, whereby they are conveying judgment, justice, and righteousness down our streets, from the great fountain. Nay, this great and dread assembly puts awe upon all mankind. And the more daring and desperate are kept within compass, from a sense of this most terrible seat of thunder hanging over their heads, and upon every affront ready to break in strokes of vengeance and woes upon them, especially if they grow beyond the reach of common law. And in ordinary cases.

(2) The executive power, or ministers of the law, are like a standing camp to awe, and a flying army to beat off the enemy; they have their spies and scouts out in every quarter to observe his motions, and break his measures, namely in the innumera-

ble numbers of all sorts of civil officers; and thus by the sword of justice they hunt down sin, and impiety in the land. They are a terror to evil men, and a praise to them that do well; for the civil authority, by their wise and just precepts, their personal and noble examples and zealous administrations, outdo Plato himself with all his moral reasons; for they can turn a Sodom into a Sion, and keep Sion to be Sion evident by the history and chronicles of several governments of God's ancient people. *Nam regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis.* For chief rulers, by their good or bad measures, can make or mar, kill or cure a nation, in a moral sense.

2. The churches.

View once more, from some lofty promonotory or Pisgah, those goodly tents and tabernacles of Israel! Listen! Is not God with them, and the shout of a king amongst them? Are they not as valleys spread forth, and as gardens by the river's side, which the Lord hath planted? And yet, notwithstanding, may we, must we under your conduct, break up their fences, to give them to another sort of culture? Nay, consider well! Are not the flowers better wed, and the weeds more kept down, than in most of the enclosures in the world, belonging to the great husbandman? And may you not (in reckoning up of means) allow us peculiarly to ascribe to their government, and other of their measures agreeing with the nature of it in dressing the ground? But I will not enlarge this head; it is obvious enough from their ministry, from their faith, their discipline and conversations.

3. THE NURSERIES OF LEARNING.

(1) The inferior schools, where the leaven is laid hid and kneaded in the soft dough; *et emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros*, etc.

(2) The college (that artillery garden from whence we receive our most expert soldiers of Christ, and whence Christ's troops are supplied with chief commanders, who lead on to storm the strongholds of the common enemy, and secure our great ally, religion), this is the seminary of learning and virtue, and the success is almost a miracle, unless for humiliation we must secrete the great grace and gifts of God which flow from that fountain, and are dispersed through the land.

Query. Were a council called of all the learned heads of the whole universe, could they dictate better laws, and advise better measures for the acquirement of learning, the increase of virtue and good religion, than are in that royal province?

4. The families of the country with their economy and family religion; if we take a survey of the whole land we shall find religion placed in the body politic, as the soul in the body natural. *Nam est tota anima, in toto corpore, et tota in qualibet parte*, — that is, the whole soul is in the whole body, and whole in every part. That were any other part of the body organized besides the head, it would be capable to exercise reason, etc. So religion is placed and exercised in its principles, virtues, and governments through the families of the country, so many families so many little sanctuaries.

I do acknowledge there is no general rule but has its exceptions; but under this caution I may affirm, there is no such spot of earth in the earthly globe so belabored with family devotion, reading God's word, catechizing and well-instructing youth with neat and virtuous examples, and divine prayers, *non ex codice, sed ex corde*, — not out of books, but out of hearts, the solemnizing sabbaths, and family attendance on public means as is New England. And if so, then what need have we of this late invention? Therefore to conclude, I shall, for my part, with the jealous Lacoon, enter a caution against taking down the sides of the city, or opening the walls of our Sion to let in this Trojan horse; and let all Israel say, amen! For, blessed be God, though we want to have our hearts renewed daily, but as for means, though we have no glut, we have plenty enough, and want no new institutions.

5. We come now to measure, and find out the time appointed for the council.

1. *Certain*, namely, once in the year, at the least, all the associations in the country, and according to the most plausible interpretation of the proposals, one or more lay delegates shall join and meet yearly and every year in the great assemblies.

Answer. As Austin says of time, *Vivo in tempore, loquor de tempore, sed nescio quid sit tempus*, — I live in time, I speak of time, but yet I know not what time is. So I do imagine the dictators did not well weigh time by exact balance, in all its contents, sense, and meaning, when they carved out such a large portion to this illegal claimer. Time is justly esteemed precious, in relation to heaven and grace, and

also very valuable with respect to the interest of nature and this life. Therefore, care should be had that it be not squandered away wastefully. Our natural lives, healths, and honor, families and estates are all very significant and costly things, and their dependence is much on the well husbanding of time, insomuch that in hard and penurious climates, the inhabitants had need be very saving of time for the support of all these great interests, and especially, seeing there is so much time already set off for religion.

As, 1st. The seventh part of time is assigned by the wise author of time, and that well improved, will do much for the support of religion.

2d. There are great proportions (out of the time left to our disposal) frankly bequeathed for the good of religion, as in courts, churches, college, school, families, closets, and in many other sacred intervals, breathing spells, from the hurry of business, to render men more sedate and heavenly (called time out of season) and all for the service of religion; then to add and make this offering also, without a divine mandate, is but a work of supererogation, or superstition and so will prove not only a needless but an extravagant victim.

And, moreover, to add a just aggravation or two, to set forth the evil in the imposition, I shall, with them, conclude the plea.

Aggravation I. Is taken from the great and sufficient care and provision made by the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of our platform, for the convening of occasional and needful councils, for the service of the churches, and support of religion upon all emergen-

cies. Then what need we throw away so many years of time at a venture, as is here tendered in the proposal, before our necessities or occasions call for the expense; unless we would in imitation of the Rhodian colossus or Egyptian pyramids, erect a monument of our vainglory and pride, more than of our prudence, policy, or duty.

Aggravation II. Is taken from the great affront, real and rational, done to empire.

(1) *Real.* In making thus bold, with the time and estates of loyal subjects.

(2) *Rational.* For let us but consider that about three hundred men (gownmen and swordmen) with twice the number of attendants, which will make up near a thousand strong (and all well horsed and provided) to be mustered, no man living on earth can tell for what, cannot be well resented by crowned heads, those admirers of order. That the project carried on may breed jealousies in the heart of our prince, lest that Ket, Cade, Straw, or Tyler have pitched upon an oak of reformation again, with an intent to overhaul the government, etc. And especially, seeing the crown was never advised of such a thing (as is proposed) by the regular forms of empire. There is danger of losing our time, and the credit of our loyalty together; that all things considered, the best way will be for us to keep well whilst we are well; and therefore let every man and society be advised to improve their time wisely, keep in their post, and honestly study to their own business, which God, law, and regular settlements has intrusted them with; and we may then hope things will go well with us and our holy religion.

2. *Uncertain*, namely, when the creators please, and can agree, for the more particular time is best left to the determination of each association, as the proposal affirms. And thus we are left very uncertain, when, where, or whether it will ever be; so that I perceive you have no great dependence upon it, neither must we. The wisdom of civil government hath another sort of conduct. Such things are not left to discretion, for that would be indiscretion, and the way to turn the world into a bedlam or the dwelling place of madmen. And in the example before us, suppose the arbitrators (when the question for the time is propounded) should differ, and hotly dispute the matter; and some should plead, it was best to be in the winter, and some in the summer; some argue for the fall, and some for the spring, according as every man's temper leads him; and at last, referring it to a majority of voices, should they (for want of an odd man) lock it by an equal vote, and so keep it like a game at chess for several years on the table, and neither side get the mastery; we may then in our distresses holloa whilst our throats ache, and no help comes; for they have voted themselves fast (like two bucks in their own horns) and cannot stir for our relief.

6. We must, according to promise, make some inquiry, whether this council is to meet, or for the place of meeting?

It is held in opinion that castles in the air and immaterial substances do not occupy place; philosophy assigns them no more than a *ubi*, where many may exist in *puncto indivisibili*, or on the point of a needle; and if this council is (as I apprehend it) belonging to

that conjugation or catalogue of beings, it will then have this privilege belonging to it, namely, there will be no house to build nor house-rent to pay.

7. We come now (in the last place) to consider its maintenance, by three queries.

1*st Query.* Whether the churches in their expiring, must (as all criminals do) pay for their own execution, and their estates be confiscate, and reserved as a fund, yielding a certain stipend per annum to support their executioners?

2*d Query.* Whether the contingent fees of the sessions, or the free and voluntary contribution of clients may be thought a medium sufficient? Or,

3*d Query.* Whether it must not be here as it is in some civil cases, under the cognizance of a very peaceable and good-natured justice, that for the healing of a difference amongst neighbors, advises them to agree etc., and so let every man bear his own charges.

But how it is, or which way they intend to raise a support for a standing council, yearly, and every year, I cannot find out; there is no stipend settled, or provision made, in the canons, which give it being.

It is certain in the history of God's works, he first makes his house, etc., then furnishes his table with great varieties, and then invites his guests and makes them welcome; and so it is with all regular created efficients, both rational and natural; but in this scheme there is nothing done for the support of the new-born infant, but like a runaway dam you leave it to the mercy of the heavens. But possibly the relief is stored up in your creating power; so that if the charitable churches will but find a cradle for the

first night and naturalize it, you will by your creating fiat soon find a fortune, if all the tithes in the province will do it.

Thus, according to engagement, we have passed through the several heads relating to the standing council, and I think by the analysis it is sufficiently resolved into its first nothing; and therefore in what remains, I shall be more brief in my answer.

SECTION II.

That to this end, these associated pastors, with their respective churches, shall consociate and combine.

Answer. There is plainly an Hysteron and Proteron (a preposterous speech, or misplacing of terms, pastors and churches) in this section; and though in rhetoric it breaks no great squares, yet in politics, where the just boundaries of governments are to be set out, the misplacing some great words may ruffle the whole scheme; so that according to the more wary idiom of our church government, it should be written thus, namely, The respective churches shall consociate and combine, and their pastors shall attend and minister, as their duty does oblige them.

SECTION III.

According to what has been by the synods of these churches recommended, that they act as consociated churches, in all holy watchfulness and helpfulness towards each other.

Answer. Titus, the Roman general, is very honorable for his great pity to the Israelites, in many examples that fell into his hands; but all this while he was in siege of that famous town and temple, and designed to root them out of house and home, or subject them to the mercy and pleasure of a conqueror.

So here. Though you smile upon us in reciting some of the principles of our own government (for which we thank you), yet still we must observe the noise of your mattocks, that we may meet with your trenches, for you are still carrying on your works, and undermining us.

SECTION IV.

It is propounded, as that from which our beginning has been recommended, etc.

Answer. You seem to reflect upon our beginnings, with a singular air and aspect, when you find any word or passage that falls in with your design, as though you were sensible those things were very argumentative and binding, and indeed they are so. Then why cannot you fall in with the whole settlement, and say to yourselves, what need we stand

puzzling our heads for new schemes about church-government? There is one from our beginnings, that is complete, being adjusted by the laws of honor and assigns to all parties their due, and gives to officers rule, power, and honor enough; therefore let us, now we are met, order a new impression, and so break up. For alas, alas! What need you, like the thievish bird, pick here and there a straw or a feather in our yards, to build a new nest? Or now and then gather up a kernel, or a grain out of our first fruits? The whole plantation and crop is yours, if you please to make use of it, and it will be your livelihood, as it has been hitherto; only you must remember to pay the quit-rent as honorable tenants, and not take yourselves to be lords of the manor.

SECTION V.

That the association shall direct, when there is occasion, for this council to convene, on any emergency, and shall direct whether the whole, or only a certain number of these consociated pastors and churches shall convene on such occasions.

Answer. The begged prerogatives of clergymen come so thick in this place, and smell so strong of the pope's cooks and kitchen, where his broths and restoratives are prepared, that they are enough to strangle a free-born Englishman, and much more these churches, that have lived in such a clear air, and under such enlargements so long a time. For indeed (forsooth), fourscore years has brought (not

our hogs, but) our innocent flock to a fair market, if it is come to this, that clergymen may buy and sell them (as the Romans did the Jews) thirty for a penny, or at least say, pro and con, at their pleasure, upon all the high immunities and ancient liberties of the churches, lion-like (who claims the whole prey, and leaves no share to his allies, *vel actum est de amicitia*), all is mine (says he) or farewell friendship.

SECTION VI.

It appears agreeable with the present condition of our churches, and from our beginning acknowledged, that no act of the council is to be reckoned, concluded, and decisive, for which there has not been the concurrence of the major part of the pastors therein concerned.

Answer 1. The specificating act, that empowers any member for an ecclesiastical council, is the churches' election or delegation, according to our government; so that the members sent, are invested with the power, and represent those who send them. The officers have no more of this power devolved upon them than any member, and therefore can challenge no more right (as elders) in a major or in a negative vote, than any others, as is very apparent in all representative bodies; therefore all acts must be determined by the majority of the whole, as in the house of commons, though made up of men of many different characters, when in their own countries, both as to their trust, learning, and wisdom, and other

distinguishing qualifications; yet the meanest man there has as great a force and power in his vote or suffrage as the best man in the house, for that they all equally represent the nation, one man as much as another. So in this case; for that the churches and officers were never yet since New England stood, held or accounted two distinct estates in an ecclesiastical council. Therefore,

2. Your challenge plainly defines your intention, that is to null the power of the churches, and set up yourselves as the subject or fountain of a superintending power. And then, if the churches may have so much favor as to represent themselves by their lay-delegates, in a council you shall see meet to call, you must needs allow them to be a distinct house and estate. And if so, then you must grant them the privilege of a major vote as well as yourselves, and so nothing can be acted but by their compliance also. But I must acknowledge, I have no plenipotentiary power to settle articles of agreement, for the infringing any of the rights of the churches, and therefore must draw up my memorials in complaints of encroachments upon ancient lines and boundaries, and so leave them.

SECTION VII.

The determinations of the councils thus provided for the necessities of the churches, etc.

Answer. Let any man read the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of our platform, and then judge

whether the necessities of these churches are so urgent as this proposal with too much fallacy insinuates, or whether they are anyways in Esau's straits, who thought he might sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, if not to save his life yet to gratify his peevish and distrustful hunger.

SECTION VIII.

If a particular church will not be reclaimed, etc.

Answer. This whole long section is the third way of the communion of churches, laid out in the fifteenth chapter of our platform, almost *totidem verbis*, or, in so many words. And whether or no the annexing some of the principles and rules of our vindictive and more public justice to the scheme, will sufficiently atone for the dissolution of the whole frame, which is intended by you?

CONCLUSION.

These proposals were assented to by the delegates of the association, met according to former agreement at B———, Sept. 13th, 1705, to be communicated.

Answer. The church of England has been wont to look upon us as men out of our wits, therefore they term us fanatics or madmen, but much more now. What! For men to break from the government they

themselves have established by consent and practice, and arbitrarily to rally together, and draw up a direful sentence (if not in terms, yet in intent) for the dissolution of a country full of the best churches of Christ in the world, and then (as it were) upon the bold sound of a trumpet, to excite others to ratify the dead warrant, in order to execution! What can this import or signify in the thoughts of considerate men, but a vertiginous brain? We might have learned better, and more caution, from that mother church of the nation, if not from common reason; for though the sovereign confides in the loyalty of the English clergy, yet to maintain the grandeur of government, and keep in good repair that common fence, which keeps every man in his station, therefore, according to the law and custom of England, the convocation, both the higher and lower house of that learned and august assembly, neither debates nor transacts any matter whatsoever, but what our sovereign by commission expressly alloweth of, according to his prerogative; so that certainly to acquit yourselves for wise men you should have done no less (in a matter of such weight and moment), than have petitioned the public authority for commission, before you had ventured thus far.

Objection. But possibly some may say, "We have petitioned authority to establish our councils, since we have drawn them up in form."

Ans. This is to be preposterous, and agrees with that illegal way of hanging men and then judging them; but, however, it seems they turned a deaf ear to your demands; and well they might, for they are too wise men to alter the laws of the province, long

customs, and orderly settlements of the churches, to gratify an implicit faith in the stark naked *ipse dixits* of any men; that unless you can produce a mandamus from the crown, or a precept from a higher court, which by its divine authority shall awe and direct them, you may always expect such entertainment in your precarious addresses; for most certainly you beg at the wrong door, for you beg without a brief.

To be commended to the several associated ministers in the several parts of the country, to be duly considered.

Ans. And why not commended to the general court, as has been the custom of our beginnings, etc., or why not commended nextly to the several churches? By the question proposed, the comfort, support, and well-being of these churches was peculiarly pretended, then why might not they be advised with for their approbation or esteem? For if you intend it for a new suit, or change of apparel, or a set of armor for this army in banners, it must be the only way to try it on, it being now so near finishing; and if it be done workman-like, you will have the credit and they the comfort of it; but if it prove too straight-laced, or should they feel themselves as David in Saul's coat of mail, and should shrug at it and say, "We cannot go in these, we have not proved them," yet they may throw all by and keep to their own old suit, which is not yet half worn, and the worst come to the worst, you may by any lawful writ recover your wages of those who set you on work to blow at this forge.

That so what may be judged for the service of our Great Lord and his holy churches.

Ans. You acknowledge, and so do I, that these are holy churches, and (through the grace of their great Lord) they being so, then why should they be interrupted in their government and discipline, which has been a peculiar means for the advance and promoting holiness among them? They are strict in their government; curious, yet charitable, in their admissions; in the election of all officers, they are nice, cautious, judicious, and in the main hitherto very successful. They are eagle-eyed in their watch; duly hot, and impartial in their process and exemplary acts of justice; and so dependent and free from arrogance, that they acknowledge themselves accountable under the eye of the consociation for their administration; and freely, and without covin, render an account of their actions, and are willing to receive advice, etc. Then why should you disturb them?

You acknowledge them to be holy churches, and you may well! Then certainly they are the bethels, where God dwells; and from his grace and presence, so illustrious in them, why may we not conclude, God has said, "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it?" And will then any good man have an hand in pulling down these tabernacles of the Almighty? No! rather let every man involved say, as once Job did, "I will lay my hand upon my mouth; once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further, lest I am found fighting against God;" for it is most certain all men will find themselves over-matched in such a war.

Be proceeded in.

Ans. I think we are proceeding in the best method we can for the present, for the service of these churches. That is to say, the criminal proposals being now at the bar, and having been indicted upon several statutes, and evidence for proving matter of fact being legal and sufficient, the case is now to be delivered to the great jury of trials, namely, the impartial reason of the churches; and there having been no such deed done, or seen, from the day that this good people came up out of the land from the other side of the great sea, unto this day, consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds, Judges, 19: 30.

And upon due deliberation, if, under the conduct of law and reason, you shall bring in guilty, then I petition for the crown that justice be done in this following manner, not by banishment, præmunire, or perpetual imprisonment; but that the proposals be sentenced to die the death of heretics, and their ashes be exposed to the four winds; that the whole scheme may, beyond all hope of retrieve, be lost in oblivion. And let the churches, according to their platform, recover and maintain their authority, liberties, and lustre, so long as the sun and moon shall continue.

The date, —— November the 5th, 1705.

Ans. Blessed! thrice blessed day! Uphold and maintain thy matchless fame in the calendar of time, and let no darkness or shadow of death stain thee; let thy horizon comprehend whole constellations of favorable and auspicious stars, reflecting a benign influence on the English monarchy. And upon every return, in thy anniversary circuits, keep an indulgent

eye open and wakeful upon all the beauties (from the throne to the footstool) of that mighty empire!

And when it is thy misfortune to conceive a monster, which may threaten any part of the nation's glory, let it come crippled from the womb, or else travail in birth again, with some noble hero, or invincible Hercules, who may conquer and confound it.

The last binding vote.

At an association meeting, the foregoing proposals were read and assented to.

Ans. Whether for a small junto of gentlemen, without being orderly called (as a committee of wise and learned men to survey an old government, and make their report) by any supreme authority, for them of their own heads to meet and draw up articles against, and in imitation of, the highest and most regular state on earth; to vote up a scheme of their own inventing, and thereby sign the condemnation of a grave ecclesiastical government, which has been adjusted by the rules of equity and honor, and for the security of all persons and parties interested and involved, and regularly settled and established by all the churches in the province; and owned, ratified, and honored by the civil authority of the empire, and eminently blessed by God through a long series and succession of years; now whether such a daring action as this can be placed under any of the topics of political or moral wisdom, either of the fear of God, allegiance to their prince, or love to their country? Or whether or no they do not, for their defiance to the churches in this bold and terrible vote, rather

merit a page in the chronicles of time, and there, in capital letters, be written, not an association of wise, but a faction of disorderly, etc., and impolitic men?

The introduction to personal signing.

PRESENT.

Ans. A council of war (by adjournment met without commission) consulting the most plausible way to blow up the walls of our Zion. But where the place was, or the persons who were present in this rendezvous, shall never be told by me, unless it be extorted by the rack. And though I have endeavored with freedom of argument to subvert the error, I will never stain their personal glory by repeating or calling over the muster-roll.

Therefore, as Noah's sons cast a garment upon their father's nakedness, so (leaving them in the crowd) their names (for me) shall repose under a mantle of honorable pity and forgetfulness.

Yet wishing they may never more harbor such thoughts, or promote such a design as is projected by these proposals; but hereafter, when temptation makes its signal, let them rather trespass upon gravity, by following the hounds in the forest, or by a more submissive and moderate way (to baffle the enemy, and wear off the impression), let them write on the ground, or, with the famous Domitian, spend the time in catching flies, rather than contrive how to subvert or alter the government in the churches by such despotic measures, especially in an empire and province so charmed with such enchanting liber-

ties as ours are. For otherwise they may chance to bring, if not an old, a new house upon their heads, according to that saying, *Debile fundamentum, fallit opus.*

> A work, if done, and no foundation laid,
> Falls on the workmen's head; thus they are paid.

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posals. By John Wise ... 4th ed. Boston, Congregat
board of publication, 1860.

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1. Congregational churches in New England. 2. Congrega
churches—Government. I. Congregational board of publicatio
Title. III. Title: The churches' quarrel espoused. IV. Wise, John
-1725. The churches' quarrel espoused.
38-34

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